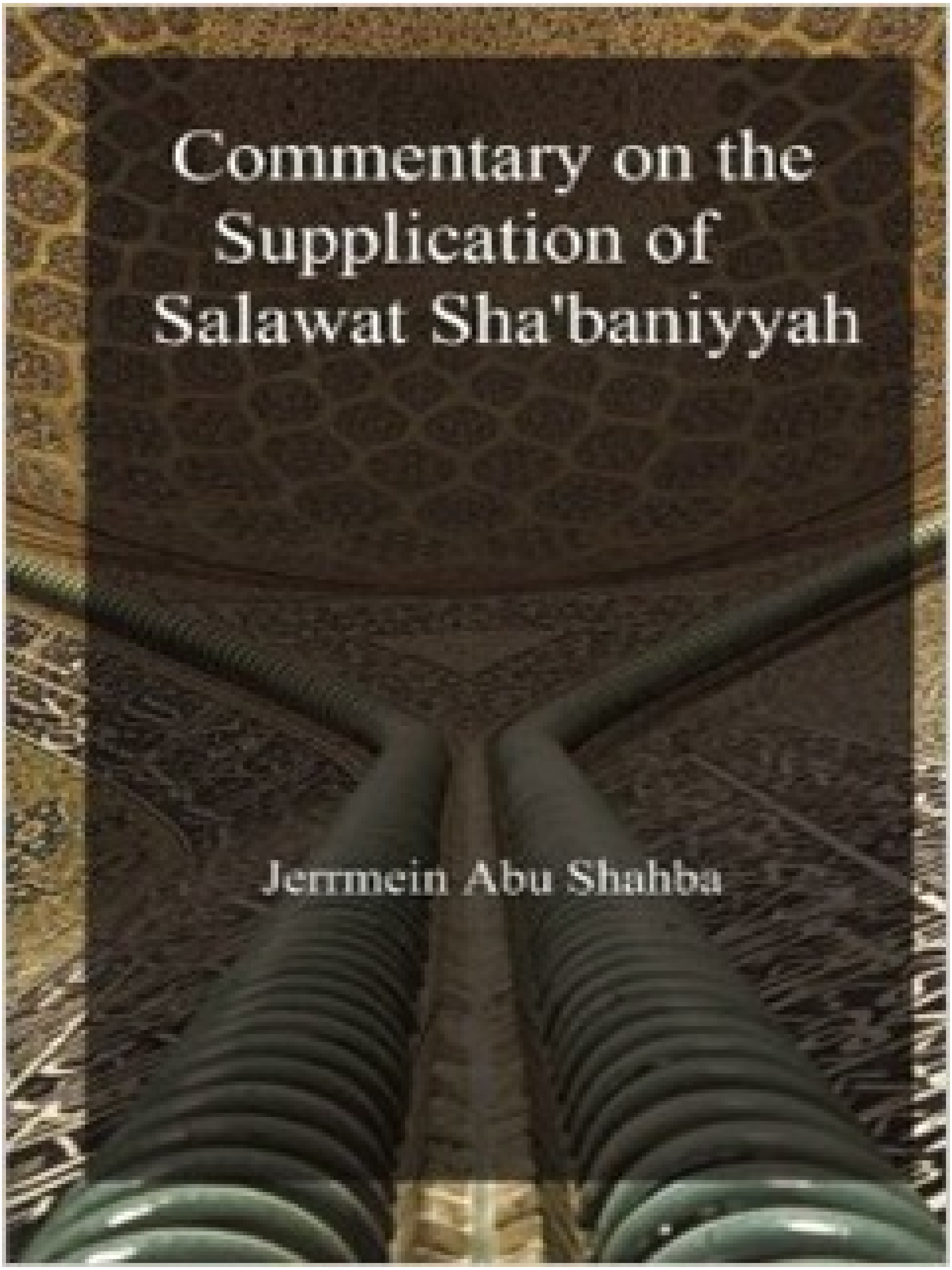

Commentary on the Supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah
Jerrmein Abu Shahba

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

Commentary on the Supplication of Salawat Sha’baniyyah

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Taught by Imam 'Ali ibn Al Husain Zainul 'Abideen (AS)This text is a brief commentary on the famous Supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah which has been taught to us by Imam Zainul 'Abideen (peace be upon him). The reader is encouraged to analyze and reflect upon the deeper meanings of each word to better appreciate this precious .jewel and recite it with cognition

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful the Compassionate

The famous supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah is one of the most beautiful and valuable prayers which has been gifted to us by the mercy of the Almighty Allah (SWT) .(in the holy month of Sha'ban and was taught by Imam Zainul 'Abideen (AS

In this paper, we will attempt to analyze this supplication word by word in a rudimentary fashion and reflect together upon its deeper meaning so that we can better appreciate this prayer and recite it with cognition. This supplication is .composed of nearly ١٠٠ words which we divided into ١٩ phrases

We chose to study this supplication since this is one of the unique prayers which presents multitude of ideas and condenses them in a few words. Each word and phrase speaks volumes of knowledge which may be dissected thoroughly, however for the sake of brevity, we aim to simply touch the water of vast knowledge so that perhaps some light may be shed on the apparent and hidden meanings of this

supplication based

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on the Holy Qur’an and authentic narrations by the purified Ahlul Bayt (AS) as well as .the interpretation of esteemed scholars and exegetists

Our limited ability aside, it is our hope that we may encounter some treasures in this short journey and walk away with valuable fruits to digest in our spiritual systems and .enrich our minds and souls

This supplication is commonly known as Salawat Sha’baniyyah since it begins by repeatedly sending benedictions (Salawat) on the Holy Prophet (SA) and his purified Ahlul Bayt (AS). The main theme of this supplication revolves around the virtues of Ahlul Bayt (SWT) as this is the month which Allah (SWT) dedicated to the Holy Prophet .((SA

It is also sometimes referred to as Dua Shajarat Al Nubuwwah (Supplication of the Tree of Prophethood) since the supplication commences with these profound words. It is reported through authentic sources that Imam Zainul ‘Abideen (AS) used to recite this supplication every day in Sha`ban at the time sun passes the merdian (Waqt az-.Zawal) and on the night of ۱۵th Sha’ban

The words of this discourse with Allah (SWT) serves more as a lesson for us which provides insight than just mere request for personal needs for the mundane world. It is a crash course designed to walk us quickly through the garden of Wilayah and help us recognize the essence and goal of our existence. All praise be to Allah (SWT) who guided us to this piece of gold and inspired us to delve in

the deep waters of this supplication hoping by His help and guidance to discover .something beneficial and worthwhile for this life and the hereafter

Commentary on the Supplication

Basmala

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate

The expression of Bimillah Al Rahman Al Raheem, also known as Basmala, is a beautifully poetic phrase which offers both deep insight and brilliant inspiration. It would take many volumes of books to analyze in detail the significance of this .expression word by word

We cannot fathom the magnificence of the word "Bismillah" however it suffices for us to know that according to Imam Ar-Ridha' (AS) as cited in Tafseer Al 'Ayaashi, when asked about the greatest verse in the Qur'an, he said "Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Raheem" is closer to Allah's greatest name than the whiteness of the eye (sclera) to ".(its blackness (pupil

This expression is so magnificent and so concise that all but one chapter of the Qur'an (Surah Al Tawba) begins with the words Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Raheem. It has often been said that the phrase Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Raheem contains the true essence .of the entire Qur'an as well as the true quintessence of all religions

The common translation of this phrase fails to capture the true depth of meaning or the inspirational message of this beautiful expression. It is by pronouncing the name of God and through His compassion and mercy that we as servants begin the discourse with Allah (SWT) in the supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah. The peak of servitude of a

creation is to submit to His kingdom by admitting His superiority as well as His .absolute attributes

The phrase "In the name of" (Bismi) is an idiom having the connotation of with the blessings of, under the governance of, as an instrument of, as a representative of, on behalf of, with the support of, or for the glory of. In each of these cases, the expression "In the name of" indicates that one is submitting to, honoring or glorifying .that which is referred to

The central idea here is that whatever we do, every step that we take, every breath that we breathe is done for, because of, and through the essence of the One who has created us. As Imam 'Ali (AS) explains, every creature takes Allah as God when they undergo times of calamity and have needs and have no one to turn to but Him. By .calling out Bismillah, it is equivalent to beseeching help from God for all your affairs

Imam As-Sadiq (AS) confirms this idea by presenting the analogy of a person who rides a ship which suddenly sinks and he naturally calls out for help from something even if he is an atheist. That thing which he is resorting to is Allah the Almighty. It is not us that do the work, it is not us that make opportunities appear, it is not us that produces fruits from every action as we alone are powerless and are totally dependent upon the Creator for the very

essence of life itself. Thus, this beautiful word Bismillah is a magnificent reminder of .our relationship to our Creator and our relationship to all of creation

Bismillah expresses our wonder, awe and thankfulness while it also expresses our innermost prayer that we may have the blessing of another breathe, another moment of life, and that we may walk on a path of truth and understanding. To say Bismillah is to humbly offer one's self as a vehicle for the glory and majesty of The .One

The two terms Rahman and Raheem refer to attributes of the One God and they are often translated as Merciful and Compassionate, but the roots of the words point to a deeper meaning. Both Rahman and Raheem are derived from the Semitic root r-h-m which indicates something of the utmost tenderness which provides protection and nourishment, and that from which all of creation is brought into being. Sure enough, the root 'rhm' in Arabic has meanings of womb, kinship, relationship, love, kindness, .mercy, compassion, nourishing, and tenderness

These two words, Rahman and Raheem also express slightly different variations of meaning. Imam As-Sadiq (AS) says that Rahman is a special name for a general attribute while Raheem is a general name for a specific attribute. And Prophet Isa (AS) states that Rahman is a type of mercy related to this world while Raheem is related to .the hereafter

The term Rahman describes that aspect of the source of all creation which is endlessly radiating and nourishing, regardless of whom

or what is receiving the endless flow of blessings. The word Rahman is a very emphatic statement, then that sentiment is echoed by being immediately followed by .the use of another form of the same root word

Such repetition is a joyful celebration of this Divine attribute and this is the beauty of eloquence of the Arabic language. Rahman conveys the idea of fullness and extensiveness, indicating the great quality of love and mercy which engulfs all of creation without regard to any effort or request on our part. Rahman indicates that Allah mercifully provides us sustenance even if we cease to obey and worship Him, as .indicated in Tafseer Saafi

On the other hand, the term Raheem describes that aspect of mercy which is issued forth only in response to the actions and behavior of the recipient. It is in this manner that God takes ten steps toward us when we take even a single step toward God. Allah (SWT) is Raheem with our religion, our wordly affairs, our hereafter and He has made it easy for us with least amount of burden (Tafseer Saafi). According to many .narrations, the mercy associated with Raheem is specific to the believers only

As mentioned in the book Al Khesaal, it is recommended to recite this verse with a loud voice during prayers and it is considered to be one of the five signs of a true :believer. There is also a sacred Hadith (Qudsi) in which Allah (SWT) says

كل أمر ذى بال

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لم يذكر فيه بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم فهو أبتر.

Every considered matter which “Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem” is not recited is put) at halt.). Along the same lines, Allah (SWT) said to Prophet Musa: “O Musa! Ask My servants to confess about Me that I am the most Merciful of all the merciful and I answer the supplications of the uneasy souls and I ward off the troubles and turn the conditions of time and I grant bounties after calamities and appreciate even small deeds and give reward generously and turn the needy into the affluent and that I am the everlasting Mighty and Omnipotent Lord and that they should pray to me.” ((Hayaat Al Qulub vol I

Indeed there are many secrets to this common yet profound expression such that it is narrated that whoever among the Shia (followers of Ahlul Bayt) abandons its recitation, Allah (SWT) will test him with a trial to remind him of praise and gratitude and to erase his shame acquired due to neglecting its recitation. The school of Companions, however, disagree that this verse is part of every Surah and hence they abandon its recitation. It is certainly not a coincidence that this verse be a point of contention among the Muslims. In fact this contention on a verse which bears no controversial issue and is simply highlighting the mercy of Allah and His attributes implies to us that there are indeed hidden secrets behind this expression which requires further contemplation on our

.part

If we ponder further, we'll realize that that Surah Al Fatiha (Hamd) is also known as the "The Seven Which is Often Repeated" (Sab'aa Al Mathaani) and "The Mother of the Book" (Umm Al Kitab). The verse "Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem" is one of the Sab'aa Al Mathani which proves that it is indeed a verse that is part of every chapter in the Qur'an. Being that this expression is included as the Mother of the Book and Saba'a Al Mathaani, it therefore occupies great status and shares in the glory of Surah .Al Fatiha

On that note, Imam 'Ali (AS) testifies: "Know that all the wisdom of the Heavenly Scriptures are in The Qur'an and whatever is in The Qur'an is in the Fatiha (Suratul Hamd) and whatever is in Fatiha is in Bismillah and whatever is in Bismillah is in the 'Ba' of Bismillah and whatever is in the 'Ba' of Bismillah is encapsulated in the dot (under 'Ba'; and I am that dot under 'Ba'." (Yanabee' Al Mawadda

How then is all of these virtues encapsulated in the expression of Basmalah? To begin with, Ism and Allah signify The Creator and His Actions. Rahman and Raheem relate to human existence and survival, and reward and punishment respectively. 'Ba' is used in Arabic to express connection. So, the 'Ba' here defines the relationship .between The Creator and the creation

Thus, the three elements of the whole Qur'an highlighted in the Fatiha are included in the Basmalah

and the Basmalah cannot stand without the ‘Ba’ which needs the dot underneath it to gain identity. This identity distinguishes the ‘Ba’ from other similar letters such as ‘Ta’ and ‘Tha’, all of which without their dots look similar in shape. The dot under ‘Ba’ gives its distinct identity, the power, the dynamism and the recognition of the existence of The Creator, His act of Creation and the link between The Creator and the creation.

Without the dot, ‘Ba’ is incomprehensible and if ‘Ba’ is not established in Basmalah, then the relationship of worship (na'budu) and assistance (nasta'een) between The Creator and the creation cannot be comprehended. So, when the Imam (AS) referred to the dot under ‘ba’, he pointed out that whosoever does not take him as the pivot and the center loses out on the whole essense of the Qur’an. Narrations also mention that had Imam ‘Ali (AS) wished, he could have explained Surah Al Fatiha or Bismillah or the ‘Ba’ of Bismillah so much that pages would have to be lifted by ٧٠ camels!

After this delineation, we can now begin to understand why the enemies of Imam ‘Ali (AS) and those who do not believe in his Wilayat (guardianship) and successorship after the Holy Prophet (SA) have a problem with Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem! It is simply because the key to this phrase is Imam ‘Ali; hence it is not possible for any person to sincerely appreciate the meaning behind this profound expression except after acknowledging

the Wilayat of Imam ‘Ali and professing his right of ownership for Caliphate by divine .appointment

After realizing this reality, we can further understand why Allah (SWT) intentionally !stitched this verse in the beginning of every Surah of the Holy Qur’an

We can now comprehend why it is obligatory for us to recite this phrase loudly as it is a sign of our completion of faith by belief in the Wilayat of Ameer Al Mu’mineen (AS). Along the same lines, it is narrated that it is highly recommended to recite Salawat loudly because it removes hypocricy from the heart. Likewise, by pronouncing Bismillah loudly, we declare our belief in Imam ‘Ali’s Wilayat without hesitation or .hypocricy

After understanding to a certain extent the importance of the verse Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem, it is not surprising to know that there are many rewards for its recitation which cannot be enumerated. It suffices to cite this narration of the Holy :Prophet (SA) who said that

When a person recites Basmalah, five thousand ruby palaces are built for him in“ Paradise. Each palace has a thousand chambers made of pearls and in each chamber has seventy thousand thrones of emerald and each throne has seventy thousand carpets made from special fabrics and upon each carpet is seated a Hur-ul-‘Ain.” ((Tafseer Al Burhaan

A person asked for the condition necessary to win this great reward and the Holy Prophet (SA) replied that the person should recite the Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Raheem with conviction and understanding.

By “conviction

and understanding", he means none other than conviction in the Wilayah of his successor Imam 'Ali (AS) and understanding to whom the significance of this verse refers to. In another tradition, the Prophet (SA) says: "Whoever recites 'Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem' will have ۴۰۰۰ good deeds written for them, ۴۰۰۰ evil deeds (erased for them, and will be raised ۴۰۰۰ degrees." (Bihaar Al Anwaar

Many can say the Basmalah out loud by tongue, however the Imam (AS) is referring to the believer who recites it out loud while he or she is fully aware of its depths. Even further, saying it out loud reinforces love for, obedience to, and submission to Allah .((SWT

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Salawat

اَللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ و ءآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

Oh Allah! Bestow Your blessings on Muhammad and his progeny

After beginning the discourse with Allah (SWT) by pronouncing His Name in the Basmallah and acknowledging the Wilayat of His chosen guide Imam 'Ali (AS), it follows that we complement this expression by purifying our tongues with the pronouncement of Salawat (Allahuma Sali 'Ala Muhammad wa Aali Muhammad) which is to seek the bestowal of Allah's blessings on Prophet Muhammad (SA) and his purified progeny (AS). By reciting Salawat we further acknowledge the rightful successorship of the ۱۱ Imams from the descendants of Imam 'Ali (AS) who are the ."chosen ones meant by "Aali Muhammad

So what exactly does it mean to pray for the bestowal of divine blessings on the Prophet's family? According to Sheikh Ahmad Al 'Alawi, the meaning of Salat

prayer of benediction) varies according to its sender and receiver. As for its sender, if) it is Allah (SWT) then its reality is different from that which is due from His creations. From Him it is an action and from the creation it is speech which cannot mean other .than a supplication for mercy along with exaltation or something along these lines

However, when the benediction is coming from the Almighty Allah, then its meaning varies according to the receiver of that Salat. Surely, one can logically conclude that the Salat of Allah (SWT) upon the common believers is not equal to His Salat to the special chosen ones among them who enjoy a high rank in His eyes as He says in :Surah Al Baqarah

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ

[These are the messengers We favoured one above the other. [٢:٢٥٣

Sheikh ‘Alawi adds that Allah (SWT) has made His Salat upon His prophets and chosen ones to be the mirrored opposite of His curse (la’na) upon His enemies which means expulsion and separation from His mercy. As for the meaning of His Salat, it is His endearment and love and proximity for that object of His Salat, as he deserves. So if he is among the common believers, he will receive his share of Salat that he deserves .according to the level of piety and righteousness that he possesses

However, if he is from among the elect and chosen ones, then his portion from Allah ,(SWT) is Him Himself

for he is not satisfied with anything less than Him. As the holy verse describes the ,state of these exceptionally righteous believers

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاضِرَةٌ {٢٢} إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ {٢٣}

[Faces on that day will be shining resplendently. Looking towards their Lord. [٧٥:٢٢-٢٣

Since it is a known fact the Prophet Muhammad (SA) is the best of creation and the most beloved to Allah (SWT), we can imagine that the Salat that he receives from His beloved Lord is not like any Salat that may apply to any believer. In fact, we cannot fathom the splendor of that divine Salat due to the exceptional status of the Holy .Prophet (SA) and his progeny

However it suffices to make that supplication with the recognition that the Prophet (SA) and his progeny deserves the peak of reward and blessings due to the special position they rightfully earned. Surely, it is not too much for the Prophet to earn that great status when he is the one who said, "The core delight of my eyes was made to (lie in the Salat." (Salat Al Mu'min fi Dawq Al Kitab Wal Sunnah

And Salat in simple words is the relationship which the Prophet (SA) happily pursues towards His beloved Lord. So it is not a surprise that Allah (SWT) rewards the Prophet's longing for Salat by pronouncing in the Holy Qur'an that He (SWT) and His angels are sending benediction on the Prophet (SA) and furthermore ordering all of :the believers to share in that noble act

إِنَّ

اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ۚ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا .

Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. Oh you who believe! Ask [blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation. [۳۳:۵۶

When Imam Al-Kadhim (AS) was asked about the interpretation of this verse, he answered that Salat coming from Allah (SWT) is a mercy, from the angels it is a sign of purification (Tazkiyyah) from them, and from the believers it is a supplication. ((Thawaab Al 'Amaal

Furthermore, Imam As-Sadiq (AS) was asked how do we convey Salat on Muhammad and his progeny and he answered, "we should say 'May the Salawat of Allah, the angels, His prophets and messengers and all of His creation fall upon Muhammad and (his progeny and may the Salam and mercy of Allah be upon them.'" (Al-Ma'ani

Furthermore, the Sunni school of thought also verify that the Ahlul Bayt (AS) are the ones meant by sending Salawat. As cited in the Qur'anic translation of Mir Pooya, Fakhr al Din al Razi writes that "The Ahlul Bayt are at par with the Holy Prophet in five things (one of which is) in invoking the blessings of Allah during prayers, after each ".Tashahud which if not recited, renders the Salat null and void

Bukhari also writes in his Sahih, that the Holy Prophet (SA) said: "Say: 'Oh Allah send blessings on Muhammad and on Aali Muhammad (AhulBayt) just as You blessed Ibrahim and Aali Ibrahim'." (page ۱۲۷, volume ۳, Egypt

(edition

Even Ibn Hajar Al Makki writes in his Sawa’eq al Muhriqah on page ۸۷, that the Holy Prophet (SA) warned the people not to send batar salawat (salawat which has lost the tail i.e. curtailed). When asked what was mean by batar salawat, he replied: "If you stop at 'Allahumma Sali ala Muhammad' You should say: 'Allahumma Sali ala ".'Muhammad wa Aali Muhammad

It is important to note that the above verse [۳۳:۵۶] orders us to accompany the act of Salawat with the act of Salam, meaning that whenever we send Salawat to Muhammad and his progeny, we should also convey our Salam or Tasleem to them. As cited in Kitab Al Ehtijaj, Imam ‘Ali (AS) explains that this verse has a manifest and hidden meaning. The manifest is to send your benedictions and the hidden is His order to exercise Tasleem or to submit to his Wilayah after the Holy Prophet (SA). Hence, whenever we recite Salawat in a supplication, we should also remember to submit to .the Wilayah of the Prophet (SA) and his purified family

There are many inconceivable secrets, merits, and rewards for the person who recites Salawat and one of them is atonement of sins like the one who is newly-born. By our act of praying for the blessings to fall upon the Prophet (SA) and his progeny, we are at the same time asking for mercy for ourselves simply due to our acknowledgment that they truly deserve these divine blessings. It is related

that Imam Ar-Ridha' (AS) said, "Reciting Salawat on us is a mercy to that person and a gesture of proximity towards us."

This sincere step taken by the servant to reach their proximity is essentially translated as the desire to reach the proximity of Allah (SWT) because pleasing the Prophet (SA) and his progeny is equivalent to pleasing Allah (SWT). And Allah (SWT) promises that "Whoever draws closer to Me by a hand's span, I will draw closer to him by a forearm's length. Whoever draws closer to Me by a forearm's length, I will draw closer to him by an arm's length. And whoever comes to Me walking, I will come to him running." (Sahih Muslim) So by reciting this profound statement of Salawat with recognition of its meaning, the servant comes closer in proximity to his Lord.

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The Tree of Prophethood

شَجَرِهِ النُّبُوَّهِ

A tree generally bears fruit but a fruit never appears on the trunk, rather it appears on the branches of a tree. If two branches of the same tree bear fruit and we eat the fruit, we do not say that we ate the fruit of the branch. Instead we say that we ate the fruit of the tree even though the fruit appears on the branch, because it is really the fruit of the tree. Likewise, when we speak about the tree of prophethood, we are talking about the tree of Prophet Muhammad (SA).

The "tree of prophethood" is mentioned in this supplication as a description to the object of

Salawat who is the Holy Prophet and his purified progeny. In fact the first part of this supplication is a description and acknowledgement of some of the attributes that these divinely-chosen personalities enjoy, while the latter part of the supplication are .prayers for them followed by prayers for the benefit of the servant

Prophet Muhammad (SA) is the "tree of prophethood" which branched out from Prophet Ibraheem (AS). When his daughter the Master Lady of All Women Seyyida Fatima Al Zahra (AS) married her only equal, Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS), she bore two wonderful fruits that came from two infallible branches, who are his grandsons, Imam .(Hasan (AS) and Imam Husain (AS

The Infallibles themselves testified that they are indeed the tree of prophethood as it is narrated in by Al-Khaythama who relays that Abu Abdullah (AS) said to him the following, "O Khaythama, we are the tree of prophet-hood, the house of blessings, the keys to wisdom, the mine of knowledge, the station of the Messenger-ship of (Allah), the center wherein the angels interchange and the place for the secrets of Allah. We are the trust of Allah among the people and we are the great Sanctuary of Allah. We are the promised responsibility of Allah and we are His covenant. Whoever remains true to our covenant has remained true to the covenant of Allah (SWT). Whoever disregards his covenant with us he has disregarded his covenant and (responsibility towards Allah." (Kitab Al Kaafi

In Hadith Tibrani cited from

the School of Companions, it is also narrated that “Fatimah is a branch from the tree of Prophethood, and out of this branch blossom two fruits who are named Hadrat ”.Hasan and Hadrat Husain

When we analyze some verses of the Qur’an, we also notice that Allah (SWT) referred to “the tree” as a parable and an example for Muhammad (SA) and his progeny. For :example, in Surah An-Noor, He (SWT) says

"اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۖ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۖ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ..."

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the west. [[۲۴:۳۵

According to Tafseer Al Saafi and Bayan Al Sa’ada, the “Lamp” refers to the Prophet’s knowledge while the “Niche” refers to the infallible Imams from his progeny. The Prophet’s knowledge has been placed in the heart of his successor ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) who is meant by the “blessed tree” which has a lot of benefits just like the olive .tree is very beneficial

The famous story of Prophet Adam (AS) eating from the forbidden tree has a special wisdom and message to us. It is narrated that this forbidden tree is a parable for the tree of

knowledge of Muhammad and his progeny which Allah (SWT) specialized them with over the rest of His creation. They are the only ones who can "eat" from it. Sure enough, according to Tafseer Al Saafi, Rasulullah (SA), 'Ali (AS), Fatima (AS), Hasan (AS), and Husain (AS) ate from that tree after they fed the poor, the needy, and the orphan such that they did not feel any hunger, thirst, or exhaustion afterwards (story .(referred to in Surah Al-Insaan, n.۷۶

Whoever eats from this unique tree by permission of Allah (SWT) gains a lot of knowledge without having to go through the worldly process of learning. And whoever eats from that tree without permission will fail and commit disobedience. Hence, Allah :((SWT) warns Adam (AS

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلاَ مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلاَ تَقْرَبَا هَٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ.

And We said: O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the garden and eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish and do not approach this tree, for then you will be [of the unjust. [۲:۳۵

Another interpretation of this forbidden tree is that it is the tree of envy since anyone who experiences a feeling of envy or wishes to attain the position of the Prophet (SA) and his Ahlul Bayt (AS) will be tested and punished as was the case with Adam (AS) and his wife. The consequences of even approaching that tree or entertaining the thought of wishing their high status even for a split

فتكونا مِن الظالمين. second will result in that person becoming from the unjust

Exegetists explain that those who eat from that special tree and take what is not their right which is the Caliphate after the Prophet (SA) and give it to others who do not own that divine right, they will be committing injustice. Furthermore, 'Ayaashi relates in Tafseer Al Saafi that the tree mentioned in Surah Ibraheem is also a parable for .Muhammad (SA) and his progeny

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلاً كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً

كَشَجَرَةٍ

طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِى السَّمَاء. تُؤْتِى أُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا

وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ.

Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word (being) like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven. It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the permission of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men, in [order that they may be mindful. [۱۴:۲۴-۲۵

This "Good Tree" is described to have a foundation that is established and a root that is firm. Its branches reach up to heaven due to its grand status. As we discussed earlier, these branches symbolize Imam Hasan and Husain (AS) who are the Master Youth of Paradise by the testimony of the Holy Prophet (SA), so it is not surprising that !these blessed "branches" reach up to the heavens

Furthermore, verse ۱۴:۲۵ informs us that this tree is continuously reaping fruits by the permission

of Allah (SWT). These continuous fruits are symbolized by the infallible Imams who come one after the other such that there is no time or moment that this earth is devoid of a divinely appointed Imam until the return of the awaited Mahdi (may Allah .(hasten his reappearance

Interestingly, it is narrated in Al Kaafi regarding the interpretation of this verse that stem) is Imam 'Ali (AS), its) فرع origin) of this tree is the Holy Prophet (SA), its) أصل the branches) are the Imams (AS), its fruits are the knowledge of the Imams, and its) أغصان leaves are the true believers and followers of Ahlul Bayt (AS). Hence, when a believer is born a leaf develops on that good tree, and when a believer departs from this .world, a leaf falls off

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And the Afrode of Your Messages

وَ مَوْضِعِ الرِّسالَهِ

After identifying the Prophet (SA) and his progeny to be the tree of prophethood, they In general, .موضِـع الرسـاله are further described to be the afrode of the messages everything in life as a home and location it belongs to and originates from. For example the home of the constitution of the US lies in Capitol Hill in DC. And the nest where the civil rights movements for blacks originated was in the character of civil rights leader Martin Luther King. Likewise, the home address and nest of the divine .(message are the ١٢ Infallible guides chosen by Allah (SWT

They are the model for human perfection and the template which we should follow and take

our example from. In fact, all of the prophets and messengers before the Seal of Prophets understood their position of Wilayah and superiority over them and that they are the part and parcel of the unified message which Allah (SWT) intended for Imam As-Sadiq (AS) , موضِـع mankind to embrace. Regarding their lofty position and :says

"إن أمرنا هو الحق وحق الحق وهو الظاهر وباطن الظاهر وباطن الباطن وهو السر وسرّ السرّ وسرّ المستسرّ وسرّ مُقنَّع بالسرّ."

Our matter (Wilayah) is certainly the truth, the truth of the truth, and it is the manifest and the hidden, and the hidden of the manifest, and the hidden of the hidden, and it is the secret, and the secret of the secret, and the secret that is within an a hidden .enclosed secret, and the secret that is masked with the secret

There are four positions of the message that is implied by this profound statement: Bayan which is highlighted by the expression "hidden of the بيـان First, the position of manifest" means to recognize the fact that Allah (SWT) has no similarity or resemblance to anything, hence the servant worships Him and does not associate any .partner with Him

Ma'ani) is highlighted by "hidden of the hidden" which) معـانى Second, the position of Imam 'Ali (AS) says refers to the Ahlul Bayt (AS). He elaborates on this aspect and says, "We are its meanings, we are its side, hand, tongue, command, judgment, .knowledge, and truth. If we desire something, Allah (SWT) wills it

Abwaab) refers to "hidden of the manifest" and implies that) أبوابThird, the position of the door to the mercy and pleasure of Allah (SWT) are the Ahlul Bayt (AS). They are the intermediates by which we enter the Gate towards the Lord's proximity. This idea is validated by the Prophet's testimony that "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its (Gate." (Al-Mustadrak

Fourth, the position of Imamate or leadership which refers to the expressions "the manifest", "the truth", and the truth of the truth". The above profound statement of Imam As-Sadiq (AS) conveys to us the fact that there exists a vast cloud of secrecy and mysteriousness behind the great status of Ahlul Bayt (AS) such that minds cannot comprehend or fathom their lofty position which is the essence of the message. It is :therefore not surprising that Allah testifies that

اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ

[Allah knows best knows where He places His message. [۶:۱۲۴

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Household of Divine Inspiration Knowledge

وَ مُخْتَلَفِ الْمَلاَّئِكَهِ وَ مَعْدِنِ الْعِلْمِ وَ اَهْلِ بَيتِ الْوَحْيِ.

And, the place of visits of the angels, the mine of Your Knowledge, and the people of .the Holy House of Revelation

Whenever you pay a visit to another person, that visit can be due to different reasons. For example, you may visit your friend because they're ill, you may visit them to spend quality time with them out of love and friendship, or you may visit them to accomplish a certain task with them like a project or business work, etc. It follows logic that

the higher the position which the visitor holds, the greater the importance and implications of this visitation for you. For example, you cannot compare the visitation of your college friend as the visitation of the President of your country to you because .the President's status is much greater than that of your friend

Hence, when we speak about the visitation of one of the greatest creatures of Allah (SWT) who are the angels, such visitation is not to be interpreted lightly or compared to the visitation which humans pay to each other. As stated in this supplication, the address which the angels plug in their navigation system as their desired destination .is the household of the Prophet (SA) and his progeny

The obvious purpose of visitation is indicated in the words mentioned afterwards in of the message to the Holy Prophet وحی this supplication, and that is, for inspiration (SA). He is honored by the visitation of Archangel Jibrael (AS) as much as Jibrael (AS) !and the angels are honored by their visitation to him, if not more

Their desire to attain the blessings and mercy of Allah (SWT) through the intermediates personified in the impeccable characters of the Prophet (SA) and his progeny is yet another reason for their visitation to them! There is the story of Futros, one of the angels who disobeyed Allah (SWT) and was punished by being abandoned .in an island and had his wings disabled

On the occasion of the blessed birth of Imam Husain

AS), Futros happened to meet angel Jibrael (AS) and asked him to take him along to) the Prophet (SA) to seek intercession from him and forgiveness from Allah (SWT). This act of Futros was a visitation not to deliver a message from Allah (SWT), but to seek the blessings of the Prophet (SA). These blessings were symbolized in the cradle of Imam Husain (AS) which was enough to cure his wings. Even though the cradle was the object that cured, it received that honor simply because it bore the body of the !(Master of Martyrs, Imam Husain (AS

We read in Hadith Al Kisaa (Narration of the Cloak) that when the trusted Jibrael (AS) ,asked Allah (SWT) who were under the cloak, He (SWT) answered

"هُم أهل بيت النبوه ومعدن

الرساله هم فاطمه وأبوها وبعلها وبنوها"

They are the Household of the Prophet and the assets of Prophethood! They are none (other than Fatimah, her father, her husband and her two sons. (Sahih Muslim

Here, Allah (SWT) identifies these five esteemed personalities to be the household of is also used in this معدِن prophethood who are the essence of the message. The word Surely, .معدِن العلم supplication to describe the Holy Household as the core of knowledge they are the mine of knowledge which Allah (SWT) granted to them and they are the !essence of the whole message

It is important to note in the event of Hadith Al Kisaa that when angel Jibrael (AS) ,(descended to earth to the Prophet (SA

he did so for two intentions; to deliver Allah's message to them culminated in the verse of purification, and to join in this celebrative moment and gain the blessings of the presence of Ahlul Bayt (AS) under the cloak. So he requested permission from .Allah (SWT) to descend to earth to be the sixth of them

Sure enough, Allah (SWT) gave him the permission and when Jibrael (AS) greeted the Prophet (SA) and conveyed Allah's message about them being the purpose of His creation of the heavens and earths, he once again sought the permission of the Prophet (SA) to join them under the cloak, even though he already attained the .permission of the Almighty God

Now take a look at the manners of angel Jibrael (AS) and how he seeks the permission of the Prophet (SA) personally as a sign of respect and honor for him! And compare this example with that of certain companions of the Prophet (SA) who with all audacity barged in the house of Lady Fatima Al Zahra (AS) without her permission and squeezed her behind the door causing her immense pain and abortion of her unborn !child

Furthermore, the remembrance of Ahlul Bayt (AS) is rewarded such that in Hadith Al Kisaa, the Prophet (SA) answers Imam 'Ali (AS) when he asks about the significance of :this gathering under the cloak

I swear by He who rightfully appointed me a Prophet and selected me with" prophethood as a savior: this episode of ours will not be recounted in any

gathering from the gatherings of the people of the earth where a group of our Shias (followers) and lovers are present except that there will descend upon them mercy! And angels will encircle them asking Allah the remission of their sins until the "!assembly disperses

We learn here that not only do the angels descend to the house of prophethood, they also descend and share in the gatherings where the followers and lovers of Ahlul Bayt (AS) spend in remembrance of the virtues of Ahlul Bayt (AS). All that is for the sake of !!!(honoring the status of Ahlul Bayt (AS

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Sailing Ship in the Deep Sea

اَللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلی مُحَمَّدٍ و ‌آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ الْفُلْكِ الْجارِيَهِ فِی اللُّجَجِ الْغامِرَهِ

Oh Allah! Bestow Your Blessings on Muhammad and his progeny who are a boat .sailing in the deep waters of fathomless sea

The parable of the Prophet (SA) and his purified progeny is that of a boat or ship that To understand the .الفلـك الجـاريه فی اللُجـج الغـامره is sailing in a vast immeasurable ocean meaning of this expression, one has to understand the nature of an ocean and its characteristics. When we think about the great seas out there like that of the Atlantic .or Pacific ocean, we get a mixed feeling of peace and also apprehensiveness

The feeling of peace is followed by praise to the Creator for allowing us to enjoy the beautiful creation of Allah (SWT) that is appreciated by our physical senses, and that is, water. Water generally symbolizes purity and the bounty of water is indeed greater than

:we imagine such that Allah (SWT) states in the Qur'an

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ

[And We have made of water everything living. [۲۱:۳۰

The animal kingdom is conceived from a sperm which is a substance composed of water and is the cause of his creation. Today, the scientists have discovered that plants and animals live on water as its main resource which descends in the form of :rain

وَاللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا

And Allah has sent down water from the cloud and therewith given life to the earth [after its death. [۱۶:۶۵

It is narrated that water is the spring of God's mercy and according to Rasulullah (SA), ".“A believer is like water; he purifies all those surrounding him

On the other hand, we tend to feel a sense of apprehensiveness when we gaze at the darkness of the vast ocean due to its seemingly endless body of water which symbolizes the unknown of the world and the secrets that lie beneath this ocean which we are oblivious to. Just like the water has benefits for creation, it can also be a .source of destruction

For example, there is the story of Prophet Nuh (AS) and the punishment of the flood which overcame his disbelieving people. The cause of their destruction was none !other than water which drowned them completely and wiped them off this earth

,As mentioned in the Qur'an

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا

But they rejected

him, so We delivered him and those with him in the ark, and We made them rulers and [drowned those who rejected Our Signs. [۱۰:۷۳

كذبواSo it is clear from this verse that the cause for their punishment was because they rejected the signs of God". This begs us to question what or who represents the بأياتِنا signs of God? Furthermore, how important are these "signs of God" such that Allah ?(SWT) destroys populations due to their disbelief in them

,These signs of God are further emphasized in another verse

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ثُمَّ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا ۚ إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُنْتَقِمُونَ.

And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord, then he [turns away from them? Surely We will give punishment to the transgressors. [۳۲:۲۲

In the explanation of this verse, Sheikh Al Tabarsi states in his Majma' Al Bayan fi Tafseer Al Qur'an that there is no person that does more injustice to himself than one who is shown the guidance who are the Proofs of Allah who would lead him to His Ma'refat (recognition) and proximity, but then turns away from that purified source of .guidance

These proofs of Allah (SWT) are the Infallible Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (SA), and so we can correlate this verse with the previous [۱۰:۷۳] and conclude that those who dispute the signs of Allah (SWT) who are the Infallible guides from the Prophet's household will be punished severely like those who

.(were drowned in the flood during the time of Prophet Nuh (AS

When we read this words in the supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah which talks about the "boat sailing in the deep waters of fathomless sea", we can now reflect on the that Arc of Salvation of Prophet Nuh (AS) and remember the punishment of those who dispute the signs of God. Taking it further, can we conclude that a similar consequence will fall upon those who desert the Arc of Salvation of Prophet ?Muhammad (SA) who is the best of creation and the Seal of Messengers

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Joining the Arc of Salvation

يأمَنُ مَنْ رَكِبَها وَ يَغْرَقُ مَنْ تَرَكَهَا

.Safe is he who boarded it and drowned is he who abandoned it

The very next phrase of the supplication describes the position of the passengers riding this boat that is sailing in the vast ocean. These riders are assured salvation and security as a guaranteed service for their acceptance to ride this arc which Allah (SWT) commanded them to ride. At the same time, those who refuse to ride this blessed ship is promised the punishment of drowning. This clearly highlights to us the importance of this ship which is very sacred in Allah's eyes such that its passengers .are affected positively and its non-passengers receive retribution

In fact, in the famous Hadith As-Safinah narrated by Anas ibn Malik, the Holy Prophet :(SA) said

"مثل أهل بيتى كمثل سفينه نوح من ركبها نجا ومن تخلف عنها غرق."

Surely the likeness of my Ahlul Bayt is similar to Noah's

Ark, whoever boards it will attain salvation and whoever remains behind is drowned. ((Al Durr Al Manthur

This authentic tradition which has been narrated by all of the great Sunni scholars without exception and with unbroken continuity, points to the fact that the parable of the arc of Prophet Nuh (AS) is like that of the arc of the holy household of Prophet .(Muhammad (AS

Whoever refuses to ride this blessed arc by refusing to accept the signs of God represented in these holy personalities will drown inevitably, just like the son of Prophet Nuh (AS) drowned though he was the son of a prophet. It is worthy to note here that if the son of a prophet did not attain refuge and protection for his close blood relation to his father, then surely the status of 'companionship' of a prophet will not suffice to save that person from Allah's wrath if he fails to obey His commands !and enter His door the way He (SWT) desires

One of the distinguished religious scholars of the Sunni sect, Imam Shafi'i, admits that our attachment to the purified family of the Prophet is the means of our deliverance. In this regards, Imam Shafi'i testified the following: "When I saw different schools of thought directing people toward the seas of ignorance and deviation, I boarded the ark of salvation in the Name of Allah. This arc is verily crystallized in the Ahlul Bayt of (the Seal of the Prophets." (Al-Mustadrak

Indeed those who choose to

embark this arc of salvation will enjoy a smooth ride that is for the sake of Allah (SWT) ,as described in this verse

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا

□

إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ.

And he said: Embark in it, in the name of Allah be its sailing and its anchoring; most [surely my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful. [۱۱:۴۱

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Proper Adherence to Ahlul Bayt

الْمُتَقَدِّمُ لَهُمْ مارِقٌ وَالْمُتَأَخِّرُ عَنْهُمْ زاهِقٌ وَاللاّزِمُ لَهُمْ لاحِقٌ.

Those who went ahead of them were misled and those who lagged behind them were .ruined and those who adhered to them were united with them

In the above statement of this supplication, the wayfarer following the example of Ahlul Bayt (AS) is advised not only to follow the Siraat Al Mustaqeem (Straight Path) which they represent, but they are given specific instructions on how to follow this path because any deviation or digression from the treading of this path will lead to misguidance. The follower is urged not to go ahead of Ahlul Bayt (AS) or race them or try to exceed them. Often times, we imagine that we can be better than the role model, for example, or become more knowledgeable than our teacher, and that may .be the case in some instances

However, when it comes to the perfect role model and seamless template to mankind, there is no room for the human being to even attempt to be better than them or exceed their ranks. History relays to us that the reason why Prophet Adam (AS) and his wife were

tested with the forbidden tree was because when they realized the high rank which the Holy Prophet (SA) and his Ahlul Bayt (AS) enjoy in the eyes of Allah (SWT), they .wished in their minds to earn that same position

As a result, Allah (SWT) tested them simply for the thought which crossed the mind because it is not appropriate for us to wish their position or to go ahead of them. Along the same lines, the Holy Prophet (SA) advised us regarding Ahlul Bayt (AS), "Do not be ahead of them for you will perish, do not turn away from them for you will perish, and (do not try to teach them since they know more than you do!" (Al Durr Al Manthur

To comprehend the meaning of the above statement in the supplication, we have to Laheq).) لاحق ,(Zaheq) زاهق ,(Mareq) مارق first understand the meaning of the key words Mareq) means to go against the law and its meaning may vary) مارق ,By definition depending on the context. For example, history records that the Mariqeen fought against Imam ‘Ali (AS) in the battle of Nahrawan, and they are a group among the Muslims who entered the religion; however, they quickly exited out from it and became misguided. The Mariqeen are likened to an arrow which goes out from its bow in quick speed as they also deviated from Islam very quickly. If an arrow doesn’t .reach its target, it is said to be a bad or bogus arrow

In the case of the Mariqeen, they are those who entered Islam but it did not benefit !them as if they were never Muslims to begin with

Imam ‘Ali (AS) testifies in this regard that he heard the Prophet (SA) say: "During the last days there will appear some young foolish people who will say the best words but their faith will not go beyond their throats (i.e. they will have no faith) and will go out from (leave) their religion as an arrow goes out of the game. So, wherever you find them, kill them, for whoever kills them shall be rewarded on the Day of Resurrection." ((Sahih Muslim

It is also advised that the devotees of the holy household do not lag or stay behind the Ahlul Bayt (AS) or else they will be from the Zahiqeen) زاهقين (. By definition, the word Zaheq means to be gone and destroyed, just like Allah (SWT) says,

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقا.

And say: The truth has come and the falsehood has vanished; surely falsehood is“ [bound to perish.” [۱۷:۸۱

In this verse, the word Zahaqa is used to indicate that falsehood will perish and .vanish

With that in mind, let’s return back to the above expression in the supplication which states that lagging behind the Ahlul Bayt (AS) will lead to perish. In our everyday lives, we often times experience the consequences of lagging or staying behind. For example, when a student lags behind in his studies and fails

to keep up with the teacher or the lessons which his teacher gives, then he will naturally end up not doing well in the exam and will fail the course. On the other hand, we've experienced that when we focus on our studies, complete our homework on a daily basis and avoid procrastination, we feel that we are on the same page as the .teacher

Thus the next lesson becomes fairly easy to understand and we do not become confused. As a result, when it comes time for final exams, the process of studying becomes more of a refresher without the need to catch up with the lessons or homework we missed and without the need to cram the night before the exam in order to pass the test. Likewise, if we at least perform the basic obligatory responsibilities that are required of us, we will be caught up on the path of Ahlul Bayt .((AS

those who adhered to them" وَاللاّزِمُ لَهُمْ لاحِقٌ The third advice in this phrase states that to another thing, it denotes (ملزوم) were united with them." If something is Malzoom that they are close to each other and are following one another. And the term Laheq means to join or unite or link with something. In this context, those who abide by (لاحق) the Wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) and obey them will achieve salvation and join them not only in this world but also in the hereafter. Uniting with the chosen luminary

personalities who are the reflection of Allah's magnanimous attributes is surely the .peak of bliss for a servant seeking the proximity of the divine abode

When Sheikh Muhammad Sanqoor was asked how can a person commit the mistake he explained that ,"المتقدم لهم مارق" of being among those who fall under the category of this stage is reached when a person denies the Wilayah (guardianship) and Imamate (leadership) of Ahlul Bayt (AS) and usurps their rights. It refers to those who goes against them and tries to belittle their position. Such person becomes misled as he no longer benefits from his "Islam" and he is the same whether he enters Islam or leaves it. It is analogous to a person who takes a bath to cleanse himself but still comes out .unclean and impure

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Ahlul Bayt Cave of Refuge

اللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ الْكَهْفِ الْحَصينِ

O` Allah! Bless Muhammad and his progeny who are the Strong Refuge

The parable of the Prophet (SA) and his progeny is like the strong and robust cave. The story of the People of the Cave (also known as As-haab Al Kahf or the Seven Sleepers) is mentioned in Surah Al Kahf in the Holy Qur'an and as we know, the Qur'an is not a book of stories nor is it limited to the people mentioned in a story or historical .event. Otherwise, the verses would die with the deaths of the people it is referring to

In the story of the People of the Cave, several youths from the nobles

of the community who held very high position believed in the oneness of God and the religion of Prophet Jesus (AS). Because the community they lived in were predominantly nonbelievers, the King of their time did not accept the fact that they embraced Christianity. So he sought to persecute them and force them to abandon their faiths, but these devout believers were steadfast in the beliefs and stood up against the king of their time. They announced their acceptance of the monotheistic .faith and defied the existing polytheistic faith

In short, they eventually sought refuge in a cave where they escaped for their lives in ,a miraculous manner. As described in the Qur'an

إِذْ أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا.

When the youths sought refuge in the cave, they said: Our Lord! grant us mercy from [Thee, and provide for us a right course in our affair. [١٨:١٠

As they sought refuge in the cave, they prayed to their Lord for mercy and blessings and that He (SWT) takes care of their affairs and makes the matter easy for them in attaining His pleasure. In simple words, they exercised complete Tawakkul .((dependency on Allah's will) and Tasleem (submission

In fact the Qur'an states that the cause of Allah's mercy to them was that these youths abandoned and renounced the false beliefs of the polytheists of their time and they did so by their own free will. When they took that bold step

considering their high position at that time and the risks that were at stake for them, Allah (SWT) awarded them by granting them salvation by His mercy. That salvation was represented in the cave in a mountain which protected them from the evil of the :nonbelievers. Hence, Allah (SWT) says

وَإِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلا اللَّهَ فَأْوُوا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مِرْفَقًا.

And when you forsake them and what they worship save Allah, betake yourselves for refuge to the cave; your Lord will extend to you largely of His mercy and provide for [you a profitable course in your affair. [١٨:١۶

In the context of our discussion, the exegetists interpret the cave of the People of the Cave to represent the Prophet (SA) and his purified progeny. In fact, one of the names cave". Supporting that, Abi Hamza Al Thumali narrates" كهف of Ahlul Bayt (AS) is the Our position to you is ".إن مثلنا فيكم كمثل الكهف لأصحاب الكهف" ,that Imam Al Baqir (AS) said (like that of the cave to the People of the Cave. (Kitab Al Ghayba

The resemblance here lies in the fact that just like the cave protected the believing youths who resorted to it for the sake of Allah (SWT), likewise anyone who seeks refuge in the cave represented by Ahlul Bayt (AS) will also attain salvation. This tradition in itself proves the concept of intercession (Shafa'at) and intermediacy which is reflected in the "cave" that will provide guidance and

.protection

Furthermore, when Imam ‘Ali (AS) describes the position of the ١٢th Awaited Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) from his progeny, he says in his regards that he His cave is the most spacious among you and he is the most "أوسعكم كهفاً وأكثركم عِلماً"is (knowledgeable among you. (Kitab Al Ghayba

Some scholars interpret the “cave” to symbolize Imam Mahdi (AFS), and the People of the Cave to be the ٣١٣ companions who will support him, while the “raqeem” is an attribute to the special book in the hands of the ١٢th Imam which contains the names .(of the “army of rage” which is the promised number (raqam

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Source of Help Protection

وَ غِياثِ الْمُضْطَرِّ الْمُسْتَكينِ وَ مَلْجاءِ الْهارِبينَ وَ عِصْمَهِ الْمُعْتَصِمينَ.

.Rescue for the distressed and the helpless, shelter for the fugitives and protection

After we acknowledge the fact that the holy household of the Prophet (SA) are the Arc of Salvation and the Cave which we seek refuge, we furthermore describe their authority upon us which Allah (SWT) bestowed to them. Their authority is such that they are referred to in this supplication as a source of “rescue”, “shelter/safe haven”, .and “protection” for those who seek it

These three attributes are all attributes which the divine Creator possesses in the absolute form; however, He (SWT) has granted them these privileges out of His grace and love to them. Every human being and creature can certainly imagine a situation in the past or present where they needed either help, a save haven, or protection from

something. Many of us have experienced a distressful situation which compels us to .call for help and seek assistance and support even in our trivial issues

Allah (SWT) directs our attention in the Qur'an that when a person reaches the state ,of distress and agony, he must resort to Allah (SWT) for help

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ

Who answers the cry of the distressed person when he calls upon Him, and removes [the evil? [۲۷:۶۲

However, in order to guarantee the best results that our call will be answered by the Almighty God, we are encouraged to seek help from His divine intermediates who are much closer to the divine abode than we are. This idea is supported in the Qur'an in :numerous verses such as

يا أيها الذين آمنوا اتقوا الله وابتغوا إليه الوسيله.

[Oh you who believe, fear Allah and seek the ways and means to Him. [۵:۳۵

The Infallible guides themselves desire their followers to seek them as intermediates; hence among many other supplications, Imam As-Sajjad (AS) is teaching us this prayer to recite in the days of Sha'ban for our own benefit not only in this world but in the hereafter. They will hold the hand of the weak believer and free them from the .chains and shackles of Hell on the Day of Judgment

It is narrated that Imam As-Sadiq (AS) said to Jabir ibn Abdullah Al Ansari that on that fateful day Lady Fatima Al Zahra (AS) will say: "My Lord, I wish that

my position would be realized on such a Day!" Allah (SWT) will answer her: "Daughter of My beloved! Go back and look for everyone in whose heart was love for you or for any of your progeny; take their hand and lead them into Paradise!" The Imam (AS) said: "Oh Jabir, by Allah; Jabir, she will pick her Shiites (followers) and those who love (her just like a bird picks good seeds from bad seeds!"(Al-Mustadrak

The last part of this verse indicates that those who seek any type of protection from anything should seek it from the purified Ahlul Bayt (AS). This notion is also supported :by another verse

وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِمْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَى صِرَطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ.

[Whoever holds fast to God will be guided in the right path. [۳:۱۰۱

And the "Siraat Al Mustaqeem" as mentioned in Surah Al Fatiha when we beseech our God to guide us to the Straight Path refers to none other than 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS), according to most exegetists of the School of Ahlul Bayt (AS). Imam 'Ali (AS) represents all of the Infallible Imams from his lineage, so from this verse we realize that in order to acquire protection from Allah (SWT), one has to be guided to the Siraat .(Al Mustaqeem represented in the luminous character of Imam 'Ali (AS

As we recite this phrase in the supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah, we should remind ourselves that although we seek the help from Allah (SWT), we do so through His chosen intermediates who

are the door to His infinite Mercy. So this phrase is a clear proof to the authenticity of intercession via intermediates who are much closer to the divine abode and who hold .the position we discussed so far

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Wilayah to the Righteous Ones

اَللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ الطَّيِّبينَ الاْبْرارِ الاْخْيارِ

الَّذينَ اَوْجَبْتَ حُقُوقَهُمْ وَ فَرَضْتَ طاعَتَهُمْ وَ وِلايَتَهُمْ.

O Allah: Send blessings upon Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad—the pure, the pious, the righteous whose rights have been made incumbent upon us by You and the obedience to whom has been deemed obligatory upon us by You and whose (divinely commissioned) leadership has been deemed obligatory upon us by .You

The Holy Qur'an often speaks about the "believers" and describes them with various attributes such as being pure, righteous, pious, good-doers, worshippers, devout, and virtuous, etc. But who exactly are all these attributes referring to? Does it talk about you and me who perhaps perform our daily prayers and fast the holy month of ?Ramadan

The above phrase in this supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah actually identifies the essence of these attributes which refer to none other than Muhammad wa Aali Muhammad! They are indeed the pure (طيّبين) ones who have been purified as :(mentioned in the well-known verse of purification (Ayat Al Tat-heer

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا.

Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! [And to purify you a (thorough) purification. [٣٣:٣٣

This state of purification by defaults includes them under the umbrella of

.all positive attributes that we may imagine

the pious).) الأبْرارِ Another attribute mentioned in this supplication is that they are the The Ahlul Bayt (AS) are indeed the best example of piety and they are the walking Qur'an. All of the Imams inherited the highest level of piety and righteousness from the best of creation the Holy Prophet (SA) who have been sent as a mercy to mankind. It is the Holy Prophet (SA) whom Allah (SWT) has testified in the Qur'an for all of mankind to bear witness that

وَإِنَّکَ لَعَلى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ.

[And most surely you possess sublime moral excellences. [۶۸:۴

Good behavior and pleasant manners are a general description and under that umbrella lies many positive attributes such as patience, clemency, generosity, humility, and honesty etc. for which the Holy Prophet (SA) was known among his .people even before his official inauguration as the Seal of Prophets

the righteous ones). This word is) الأخْيار The Ahlul Bayt (AS) are also referred to as the which means "good". When we make a comparison خير derived from the arabic word or in the أخيَّر and comment that something is better than another, we say that it is Certainly, the Prophet (SA) is the best of creation and his holy .أخيـار plural form .أخيار household is the best of households, so they are referred to in this supplication as

Furthermore, the supplication describes Ahlul Bayt (AS) to have rights which have been made incumbent on us. It is important to realize that these "rights" are

divinely bestowed and are not the same as human rights. It makes all the difference to understand that because the implications of loosing a human right are not the .same as loosing a divine right

A perfect example is the divine right of guardianship and Caliphate which belonged to Imam 'Ali (AS) after the Prophet's demise. It was on the ١٨th day of Dhul-Hijjah at Ghadeer Khum when the Prophet Muhammad (SA) officially announced the inauguration of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) as his successor by divine appointment. All of the .(audience present in that great event gave their pledge of allegiance to Imam 'Ali (AS

But unfortunately, many companions turned back on their allegiance after the demise of the Holy Prophet (SA) and instead appointed another Caliph among them. Thus, they prioritized their human selection over the divine selection which is a grave mistake in the eyes of Allah (SWT) as they have ignored the rights which He (SWT) has !made obligatory

This injustice committed in the right of Ahlul Bayt (AS) for successorship is not belittled by God because injustice committed against His chosen representatives is equivalent to injustice committed against him. As a matter of fact, if a servant fails to fulfill the .right of God, He (SWT) may forgive him out of His mercy and compassion

However, when a servant commits injustice (Dhulm) to another servant, especially a believer, Allah (SWT) does not forgive him unless he repents and returns the rights of those whose rights

were taken and were oppressed. And the Ahlul Bayt (AS) as we discussed are the best of Allah's creation, so one can imagine what degree of wrath and punishment falls upon those who usurps the rights of His best of creation!

As stated in this phrase of the supplication, Allah (SWT) has made two things obligatory on us: the Obedience and the Wilayah (guardianship) of the holy household. The obligation of obedience to them is due to the fact that they possess the knowledge bestowed to them by Allah (SWT) and they are the role models to mankind, so if we obey them in all our affairs, we will surely achieve salvation and reach very close to the stage of perfection which is the ultimate goal. Our obligation to their obedience is clearly stated in the Qur'an in many verses, among them,

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى الأمْرِ مِنْكُمْ.

Oh you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you. [۴:۵۹]

It is imperative for us to recognize that the obedience of the holy household is equivalent to obedience of the Prophet (SA) which is in turn equivalent to the obedience of Allah (SWT). After all, the Prophet (SA) does not speak out of his own will. Hence in many occasion, Rasulullah (SA) asserted that, "Fatima is part of me. Whoever upsets her upsets me, and whoever harms her harms me." He also testified that "Husain is from me and I am from Husain".

(Sahih Muslim)

Such profound words may seem simple to us but actually speak volumes about the high rank which his purified family enjoys in the eyes of the Prophet (SA) and Allah (SWT). The aim here is to lift our attention that the Prophet (SA) and his Ahlul Bayt (AS) are ONE chain which leads to Allah (SWT). If one ring of the chain is disconnected, .then the whole chain becomes severed

As for the obligation of Wilayah (successorship), we mentioned it has been stamped on the day of Ghadeer with the appointment of Imam 'Ali (AS) as the Prophet's Wasi (executor of will) and successor. On that fateful day, the Prophet (SA) fulfilled his mission in conveying the matter of successorship and he took the hand of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (AS) and said to his people, "Am I not dearer to the believers than their own selves?" They answered, "Yes indeed." He (SA) said (again), "Am I (SA) not dearer to the believers than their own selves?" They said, "Yes indeed." He (SA) then said, "This man ('Ali ibn Abu Talib) is the Wali (can also mean leader) of those who take me as their Mawla (master), Oh God, take friends those who take him as friends, and take as (enemies those who take him as an enemy". (Al-Mu'jam As-Saghir

Thereafter, Allah (SWT) revealed the verse announcing the completion of the religion ,and its final approval for mankind

اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نِعمتى ورضيت لكم الإسلام ديناً.

This day

I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have [chosen for you Islam as your religion. [۵:۳

When the Messenger of Allah (SWT) was asked about the meaning of “whomever I am his Mawla then ‘Ali is his Mawla”, he answered “Allah is my Mawla more deserving of me (my obedience) than myself, I do not dispute him. I am the Mawla of the believers, more deserving in them than themselves, they do not dispute me. Therefore, whomever I was his Mawla, more deserving in him than himself (and) does not dispute me, then ‘Ali is his Mawla, more deserving in him than himself, he does not ”.dispute him

In addition to the event of Ghadeer where the official pledge of allegiance was given to Imam ‘Ali (AS) for the successorship, the obligation of Wilayah on the believers had been established repeatedly since day one of the Prophet’s message in numerous occasions where he pronounced the superiority of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) as the .guardian of Islam after him

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Seeking Divine Obedience

اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلی مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَاعْمُرْ قَلْبی بِطاعَتِکَ وَلا تُخْزِنی بِمَعْصِیَتِکَ

Oh Allah! Bless Muhammad and his progeny and embellish my heart with obedience to You and disgrace me not with disobedience to You

From this point in the supplication and moving forward, the servant changes the mode of communication with Allah (SWT) and starts to make specific requests and prayers for himself. It is interesting to note that these personal prayers are made only after

the servant has confessed and submitted to the virtues of the Prophet (SA) and his holy household. It makes perfect sense that his personal prayers would have a higher probability to be heard and accepted after he enters the right door appropriately.

This is similar to the story of Prophet Musa (AS) who gave instructions to Bani Israel by orders from Allah (SWT) to enter the city Kanaan through its gate prostrating, and saying: "I seek forgiveness of the Lord and turn repentant unto Him", because therein they would live in peace and harmony with plenty of provisions. They were ordered to utter the word "حِطَّه" (Hettah) an expression of humility and repentance to Allah (SWT)) for their pattern of disobedience to Him. Musa (AS) informed his people that if they obey these orders Allah (SWT) will forgive their sins. Allah (SWT) mentions them in Surah Al Baqarah:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ ۚ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ .

And when We said: Enter this city, then eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish, and enter the gate making obeisance and say: "Repentance." (Hettah) We will forgive you your sins and will increase (reward) for the right-doers. [۲:۵۸]

In his commentary, Mir Pooya nicely correlates this story of the gate of Kanaan with the gate of knowledge represented by Imam ‘Ali (AS). The Holy Prophet (SA) informed the Muslims about another city with its gate. He said: “I am the city

(of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate." (Al-Mustadrak

So, if anyone wants to come into contact with the divinely endowed wisdom of the Holy Prophet (SA), he should first get familiar with 'Ali not only by building a close relationship and attachment with him but also by paying homage to him with expression of reverence. In Tafseer Durr al Manthur, Jalaluddin Suyuti quotes 'Ali ibn abi Talib (AS): "Our position in Islam to the Muslims is the same as the gate of Hettah ".was to the Bani Israel

Some of Prophet Musa's people followed the instructions, however another group who were arrogant entered the door but instead of saying "Hettah", they said "Hentah" (wheat) and they were not sincere in their repentance. Allah (SWT) describes :their state of disobedience in verse ۵۹

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِى قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ .

But those who were unjust changed the word which had been told them for another saying, and We sent down upon the evil-doers wrath from heaven for their evil-doing. [[۲:۵۹

So, those who unjustly change the word or covenant or command of Allah (SWT) for something other than the original are duly punished. Likewise, in the context of our discussion, those who ignore or do not pay attention to the declaration of the Holy Prophet (I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate) will suffer spiritual degradation !and go astray

Returning back to analysis of the words in this phrase of this

supplication, the servant is now ready to request his needs after acknowledging the rights of the divine guides and entering the door which Allah (SWT) ordered him to. He says, وَاعْمُرْ قَلْبى بِطاعَتِکَ Embellish my heart with obedience to You.

It is worthy to note that for a devout servant who is seeking the pleasure of His Lord, the first request he makes is not to fulfill his personal desires or for his worldly provisions. Rather, he yearns for obedience and worship to Allah (SWT) and that is his spiritual enjoyment! Not only that but he asks that Allah (SWT) embellishes his heart in such a way that his whole existence is for Allah (SWT), in service to Allah (SWT) and no one but Him!

That is the peak of servitude that a servant reaches after he has pronounced the Wilayah of the chosen guides. His acknowledgement of the rights and virtues of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) is an act of obedience in itself and after fulfilling this main obligation, he is now asking to embellish his heart with more blessings that stem for that original blessing of Wilayah!

This state of mind is perfectly depicted in the supplication of Imam As-Sajjad, "Makarem Al Akhlaq":

"وعمِّرنی ما کان عمری بذله فی طاعتک فإذا کان عمری مرتعاً للشیطان فاقبضنی إلیک قبل أن یسبق مقتک علیّ ،"

Let me live as long as my life is a free gift in obeying Thee, but if my life should become a pasture for Satan, seize me

.to Thyself before Thy hatred overtakes me

So the ultimate purpose of life is to obey and submit to the Lord and if that cannot be achieved, then death is better than a life of disobedience which serves the self and leads to Allah's wrath and results in a disgraceful life. Hence, the servant affirms his desire not to be among those who are disgraced by His disobedience. Otherwise, he :will face humiliation and shame as those mentioned in

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ.

On that day those who disbelieved and disobeyed the messenger will wish that they .[were level with the ground [۴:۴۲

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Consolation of the Unfortunate Ones

وَارْزُقْنى مُواساهَ مَنْ قَتَّرْتَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رِزْقِكَ بِما وَسَّعْتَ عَلَيَّ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ

وَ نَشَرْتَ عَلَيَّ مِنْ عَدْلِكَ وَ اَحْيَيْتَنى تَحتَ ظِلِّكَ

And bless me with consolation for those struck with poverty from Your sustenance for You have blessed me with affluence in livelihood since You have displayed Your .justice on me and bestowed life on me to live under Your shade

The servant continues to ask for more spiritual blessings which do not serve him personally. In this statement, he acknowledges three key blessings bestowed to him by Allah (SWT). The first is that Allah (SWT) has increased in his bounties and .affluence

Though the apparent context here is materialistic, one may also interpret the wealth to be not in the livelihood but more importantly wealth of your mind and soul. Some interpretations of wealth is wisdom as Imam 'Ali (AS) said, "There is no greater

wealth than wisdom, no greater poverty than ignorance." In another instance he also stated that, "The best kind of wealth is to give up inordinate desires."

There is an interesting story in which a poor believer came up to one of the Imams (AS) and complained to them that they suffered from poverty. The Imam (AS) told him that he is not poor, but the man insisted he was. Finally, the Imam (AS) asked him about his faith and beliefs and when the poor man confirmed that he would not trade his faith for anything else, the Imam (AS) replied explaining to him that true wealth is indeed your faith in Allah (SWT) and the love and Wilayah of Ahlul Bayt (AS)!

Second, the supplicant acknowledges the fact that Allah (SWT) has spread His justice on him. The Almighty God says in the Qur'an that all great prophets of God – Adam to Noah, Abraham to Moses, Jesus to Muhammad – came to establish justice in society.

Now what exactly is justice and what is its importance?

In simple words, justice means placing everything in its rightful place, balancing things in the proper order and creating harmony. If a person starts placing things in the wrong places, he then disrupts the social harmony and disturbs peace. Although everyone acknowledges the aspect of universality in the idea of justice and no one can argue the importance of its existence in our world, however it is not always easy to accomplish. So important

is this trait of being just that Allah (SWT) mentions it numerously in the Qur’an and orders us to observe justice as it is a stage of piety:

ولا يجرمنكم شنئان قومٍ على ألا يعدلوا إعدلوا هو أقرب للتقوى .

And let not a people’s enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. [۵:۸]

All great prophets of Allah (SWT) like Prophets Adam, Nuh, Ibraheem, Musa, Jesus, and Muhammad (SA) came to establish justice in society. Allah (SWT) states this point very clearly in this verse:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمْ الْكِتَبَ والميزان ليقُوم الناس بالقِسط .

Certainly We have sent Our messengers with clear guidance; and We sent down to them the Book and the scale so that humans may conduct themselves with justice. [[۵۷:۲۵]

Justice is indeed one of the absolute attributes of Allah (SWT) and His word does find fulfillment in truth and justice as indicated in this verse:

وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلاً لاَّ مُبَدِّلِ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ.

The word of your Lord does find its fulfillment in truth and in justice: None can change His words: for He is the one who hears and knows all. [۶:۱۱۵]

As explained by the prominent scholar Rasheed Turabi, “The Essence of Absolute Truth and Justice is condensed in the Essential Being of Allah (SWT) and at the station of complete divine manifestation of the Essential Being, truth and justice exist in the sanctified being of the Prophet (SA) at a rank of

perfection as a result of the effulgence/ishraqaat of the truth and justice that ".descended due to highest level of proximity of the Prophet (saw) with the Divine

So, as long as the being of the Prophet (SA) exists, he will be the manifestation of the Lord, and if there is divine radiance along with the Prophet (SA) then that divine radiance is also manifestation of Absolute truth and justice. The quest of the divine .leader such as the Prophet (SA) is to establish the system of Absolute justice

Without divine justice, neither the heavens nor the earth can exist and it is because of the Absolute justice that the complete system of existence moves forward and every thing is destined its absolute appropriate position. Thus the abode of the Imamate is the abode of truth and justice and he who is awaited is the epitome of truth and justice culminating from the chain of those divine leaders who were established on .truth and justice

According to the authentic narration of the Holy Prophet (SA), none will accomplish the divine mission of establishing justice on this earth except the last Imam (Mahdi) from his progeny who will reappear at the end of time by the divine permission, يَمْلَاءُ اللهُ الْاَرْضَ قِسْطًا وَّ عَدْلاً كَمَا مُلِئَتْ ظُلْمًا وَّ جَوْرًا He shall fill the earth with equity and justice as it was full with (injustice and tyranny. (Yanabee' Al Mawadda

Justice is also parallel to knowledge, because it is through knowledge that one identifies

the appropriate position of the divine words and places them in its just position. As Rasheed Turabi delineates, there is truth and justice in the greater creative realm but this existential truth justice cannot be comprehended without knowledge and it was this reason when Prophet Ibraheem (AS) was put to trial with various divine words, :the Qur'an announces in the verse

قَالَ لاَ يَنَالُ عَهْدِی الظَّالِمِينَ .

My Covenant (Prophethood) includes not Dhalimeen (polytheists and wrong-doers). [[۲:۱۲۴

This covenant or promise was bestowed to the holy household of Prophet Muhammad (AS) who were worthy of receiving that covenant and assuming the grave .responsibility of Imamate

The third bounty from Allah (SWT) which He blessed his servant is reflected in this And You bestowed life وَ اَحْيَيْتَنِی تَحْتَ ظِلِّكَ ,phrase of acknowledgment in the supplication .on me to live under Your shade

Now, what exactly does in means to live under the "shade of Allah (SWT)". And does Allah (SWT) really have a shade? Logic and the concepts of Tawheed (Oneness of God) deny the idea that Allah (SWT) can be imagined physically or that there is any shape or form attributed to Him. So this expression in the supplication is simply a metaphor to indicate proximity to Allah (SWT) just like the shadow of an object is very .close to that object

In a well-known Hadith, the Prophet (SA) said: "There are seven whom Allah will shade in His Shade on the Day when there is no shade except His Shade: a just

ruler; a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who love each other for Allah's sake, meeting for that and parting upon that; a man who is called by a woman of beauty and position [for illegitimate relationship], but he says: 'I fear Allah', a man who gives in charity and hides it, such that his left hand does not know what his right hand gives in charity; and a man who remembered Allah in private and so his eyes shed (tears." (Sahih Bukhari

In this beautiful Hadith, the Prophet (SA) speaks about small acts of worship which result in such a huge reward, and that is, shade on the day when there will be no shade except His Shade. This may not seem like much at first but upon reflection of the following prophetic narration, the reward is more appreciated: "On the Day of Resurrection, the sun would draw so close to the people that there would be left a distance of only one mile. The people will be submerged in perspiration according to their deeds, some up to their ankles, some up to their knees, some up to the waist and some would have the bridle of perspiration and, while saying this, the Messenger of Allah put his hand towards his mouth." (Sahih Muslim) So who would want more on this fateful day than to be under the "shade" and protection of

!?(Allah (SWT

Each of these seven deeds mentioned in the above narration lead to divine proximity. However, we must keep in mind that this and any narration which speaks about rewards of a good deed must not be taken in the absolute form. In order to deserve the reward of a deed which Allah (SWT) has promised, one must first fulfill the prerequisite conditions in their faith and creed. In other words, a person cannot deserve the reward of a good deed if he doesn't believe in the concepts of Tawheed .or Nubuwwat or Imamate, which come first before any deeds are accepted

Not only that, but if we analyze closely this Hadith, we'll notice that it states that "There are seven whom Allah will shade in His shade on the Day when there is no ".shade except His shade

So, the context of this tradition is on the Day of Judgment where no shade will exist except His shade. His "shade" does not refer to a physical entity, but it refers to those who represent him who are the divinely appointed Infallible Imams. In fact, not only and the (وجه الله) "of Allah, they are also the "face of Allah (ظل الله) "are they the "shade !SWT) as they are the reflection of His divine attributes)(كلمه الله) ""word of Allah

Being that the supplicant has reached this far in the prayer after recognizing the virtues of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) and confessing their Imamate, he can now state with

all confidence that Allah (SWT) has "bestowed life on me to live under Your shade." After fulfilling the conditions of belief in Imamate, he is now prone to the bestowal of divine proximity!

Once the servant realizes the true wealth, justice, and divine proximity that has been bestowed upon him from Allah (SWT) by virtue of his obedience to Him, whenever he sees a poverty-stricken person it is natural for him to feel sympathy and compassion for him. So he prays that Allah (SWT) grants him the opportunity to offer him consolation and kindness even if it is just a few nice words that puts a balm in the heart of those who are unfortunate.

A deeper meaning of analyzing these words may be realized when a believer who has been bestowed with the gift of Wilayah desires to share his valuable knowledge and wealth of faith with those who are still drowning in their ignorance. The believers will attempt to guide them to the Wilayah and love of Imam 'Ali (AS) and the Infallible Imams from his progeny and that cannot be accomplished except by gaining knowledge and a clear insight of the facts of history and the autobiographies of these esteemed personalities.

We learn from this phrase in the supplication the extreme importance of helping others in the general sense and not being selfless. Even if we already possess bounties or wealth, we are advised not to think only about ourselves but rather think about others. We should sympathize

with the poor and destitute out there and all those who are unfortunate or disabled in any way. To give Muwasaat means to offer your kindness, sympathy, good words and actions, support, consolation, and solace, etc. We are urged to try and offer all the support that we can to the best of our abilities.

It is interesting to note that the phrase in the supplication uses the word وَارْزُقْنی which means to “grant me” or “bless me”. The supplicant is asking for the ability to achieve Muwasaat to those who are poverty-stricken! From this we learn how important the act of Muwasaat to others is such that achieving it is such an honor in Allah’s eyes that the servant is seeking it as a grant for himself!

Often times we may intend to do a certain good deed but do not have the ability to do so or don’t have the success or accommodation to execute it. However, to be given the ability to accomplish such good act is in itself a bounty that deserves thanks to the Almighty God who gave us that power and ability to do an action which pleases Him. It is narrated that the Holy Prophet (SA) once said, “If Allah (SWT) willed good for a servant, He uses him.” Someone asked him, “How does Allah (SWT) use him?” The Prophet (SA) answered, “By giving him Tawfeeq (success) in doing good deeds before his death.”

Islam places great importance in helping other people and

fulfilling their needs. As the Prophet (SA) said, “The most beloved people to Allah is he who benefits others.” There is so much reward in bringing happiness to the heart of .others especially a believer, even if it is just one good word

In this narration, the Prophet (SA) stresses the importance of brotherhood among Muslims and its reward: “A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim; he does not wrong him nor does he forsake him when he is in need; whosoever is fulfilling the needs of his brother, Allah is fulfilling his needs; whosoever removes distress from a believer, Allah removes from him a distress from a distressful aspect of the Day of Resurrection; and whosoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of (Resurrection." (Sahih Muslim

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The Holy Month of Sha’ban

وهذا شَهْرُ نَبِيِّكَ سَيِّدِ رُسُلِكَ شَعْبانُ الَّذی حَفَفْتَهُ مِنْکَ بِالرَّحْمَهِ وَالرِّضْوانِ

And this is the month You have attributed to Your Prophet the chief of Your Prophets month of Sha`ban You have encompassed it with your mercy and pleasure

At this stage of the supplication which is recommended to recite during the days of the holy month of Sha’ban, the supplicant now beseeches Allah (SWT) by the blessings of this holy month – Sha’ban. After confessing the virtues of Ahlul Bayt (AS) and acknowledging his belief in the Imamate followed by specific prayers, he thereafter seeks more guarantees for the acceptance of his prayers by placing the Holy month of Sha’ban as an “intercessor” between him and

His Lord. Again, this is another proof which supports the idea of Shafa'at and seeking the divine abode via special and holy intermediates whether people, places, objects, .or otherwise

The month of Sha'ban which is the ٨th month in the Islamic Hijri calendar holds a special place and uniqueness among all months. First, it is unique in that it is the only .holy month that is sandwiched between two other holy months, Rajab and Ramadan

Second, it is the month preceding the Holy month of Ramadan which is the month of fasting and the month which its days are divided such that the first ١٠ days are when the door to Allah's mercy is opened, the middle ١٠ days are when the door to Allah's .forgiveness are opened, and the last ١٠ days is for emancipation from Hell-Fire

There are so much blessings and rewards that a lay-servant can gain from the Holy month of Ramadan such that it is the Prophet (SA) said in his welcome speech for this month: "Miserable is he who passes the month of Ramadan and does not gain the ".forgiveness and atonement of his sins

It is generally not possible for a person to achieve a certain goal or stage except after preparing himself and warming up for that achievement. For example, in order for a student to pass his final exams, he must first complete his daily homework across the ,semester and study diligently in all his lessons. Thereafter, when he takes his exam

he will be much prepared and more ready to done a fine job in the test as the .guarantees for his success are higher with more preparation

Likewise, in order for a servant to excel in the holy month of Ramadan and reap the fruits and blessings of this exceptional month, it follows logic that he must prepare himself spiritually beforehand. For example, fasting a few days before the month of Ramadan commences will certainly help him train his body to get used to different habit of eating. Sure enough, one of the highly recommended deeds to be performed in the month of Sha'ban is to fast its last days to connect with the holy month of .Ramadan

It is interesting to note that the transition of the discourse with Allah (SWT) in this phrase of supplication to the holy month of Sha'ban starts first by the mention of the Holy Messenger (SA). So instead of introducing the month by its name, the supplicant introduces it by the theme of that month, namely the Prophet (SA) saying , وهذا شَهْرُ نَبِيِّكَ سَيِّدِ رُسُلِكَ شَعْبانُ And this is the month You have attributed to Your Prophet the chief of .Your Prophets month of Sha'ban

Instead of saying, "And this is the month of Sha'ban, the month of your Prophet...", the supplication says "This is the month of Your Prophet...Sha'ban...". The rearrangement of words here is not random and serves to present the main idea of the sentence. We learn here that the

significance of the month of Sha’ban al-Mu'azzam is due to the fact that it is the “month of Prophet Muhammad”. He (SWT) used to say, “Rajab is the month of Allah, Sha’ban is my month and Ramadan is the month of my Nation". (Mafateeh Al Jinan) Hence, we recognize that if it were not for the Prophet (SA) who is the “Chief of Prophets” سَیِّدِ رُسُلِکَ, this month would be like any other month.

The supplicant continues his prayer by describing the month of Sha’ban by a few words that summarizes its main benefits which are Mercy and Pleasure, الَّذی حَفَفْتَهُ مِنْکَ بِالرَّحْمَهِ وَالرِّضْوانِ You have encompassed it with your mercy and pleasure. It has also been reported from Imam As-Sadiq (AS) that on the commencement of the month of Sha'ban, Imam As-Sajjad (AS) would gather his companions and address them,

"O my companions, do you know which month this is? It is the month of Sha'ban about which Prophet Muhammad (SA) used to say that it is dedicated to him. So keep fasts during this month in the love of your Holy Prophet (saw) and to attain closeness to your Creator. By Allah (SWT) in whose hands is my soul, I have heard from my father, Husain ibn ‘Ali (AS), that he had heard from Commander of Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (AS), that whoever keeps fast during the month of Sha'ban in the love of Prophet Muhammad (SA) and to attain closeness to Allah (SWT) will become a friend

to Allah (SWT) and on the Day of Judgment will be close to Allah (SWT) by His grace (and Paradise will be assured to him." (Mafateeh Al Jinan

We can also perceive the Rahma (Mercy) from Allah (SWT) in this month to be personified in the character of the ۱۲th Imam from the progeny of the Prophet (SA) who has been born in the middle of this holy month. With his birth descends the peak of mercy as he will fill the earth with justice and equity after it has been filled with .tyranny and oppression

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The Prophet Honors Sha’ban

الَّذی کـانَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَـلَّی اللهُ عَلَیْهِ وَ آلِه وَ سَـلَّمَ یَـدْاَبُ فی صِـیامِهِ وَ قِیـامِهِ فی لَیالیهِ وَ اَیّامِهِ بُخُوعاً لَکَ فی اِکْرامِهِ وَاِعْظامِهِ اِلی مَحَلِّ حِمامِهِ.

The Messenger of God used to keep vigil in devotion during its nights and observed fasts during its days humiliating himself before You honoring and respecting it till his .departure from this World

The supplicant continues to beseech Allah (SWT) by the blessings of the holy month of Sha’ban and further describes the special treatment which Rasulullah (SA) gave to these blessed days and nights. He used to fast during the days and then keep vigil in devotion during the nights. Aside from the physical benefits of fasting, there are many .spiritual advantages

The institute of the fast is one of the signs of the Almighty's mercy on those who adhere to His divine creed and it is never meant to cause hardship on anybody as the Almighty (SWT) does

not gain any benefit by causing hardship on anyone. On the contrary, He (SWT) always paves the way of happiness for His servants in this life and the next life, and He (SWT) sometimes even "pushes" them to do what is good for them, as is the case with making the fast of the month of Ramadan obligatory on every believing man and .woman

Fasting is more than a diet adjustment; it involves spiritual intensity and intercession. One of the greatest spiritual benefits of fasting is becoming more aware of our own inadequacies and God's adequacy, and becoming more aware of our own failings and His self-sufficiency. The purpose of all disciplines including fasting is to change us so .that we may become more disciplined and responsible

The believers learn to curb their desires and check them against transgression, extravagance, and the yielding to the lower desires, all of which degenerate man and bring him to the pit of self-destruction and annihilation. Fast fosters strong will, teaches patience and self-discipline, and the ability to bear hardship and tolerate hunger and thirst. In short, it brings about a clear victory over one's illicit desires and selfish impulses. It teaches the believer to abandon vices, to control emotions and instincts, to curb the tongue against saying what is wrong or inappropriate and the .conscience against contemplating upon wrongdoing or subversion

Furthermore, it promotes the spirit of unity among members of the fasting community during the holy month of Ramadan. It teaches them

humility and humbleness and instills within them the feeling of equality before Allah (SWT). The rich have to observe fast as well as the poor, the women as well as the men, the influential and powerful as well as the weak and unfortunate. It promotes the spirit of charity and compassion towards the poor and the needy and it reminds each believer of the needs of other believers. This is exactly what we discussed previously regarding the importance of fulfilling other people's needs and offering Muwasaat to other believers. The concept of fasting goes hand in hand with the idea .of Muwasaat which this supplication just alluded to

Keeping vigil in devotion during the nights in general and especially in the holy month of Sha'ban has been practiced and observed by the Holy Prophet (SA). The remembrance of Allah (SWT) is the greatest deed of the human being as it elevates his life, brings him peace and happiness, and enables him to fulfill the real mission of his life in this world. When Allah (SWT) describes believers in the Holy Qur'an, He ;(SWT) says

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ .

Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah, .[now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest. [١٣:٢٨

Among the ways of remembering Allah is waking up at night for Salatul Layl. The Holy Qur'an and Hadith have much to say about this very important part

of the worship of a believer. Its merits and effects are tremendous and whoever recites Salatul Layl regularly is following the path of the Prophets and the Ma'someen (AS). Those who wish to attain divine proximity forego a part of their sleep and wake up early to seek forgiveness from Allah (SWT). They sacrifice their sleep and comfort .for the pleasure of reciting Salatul Layl

In many verses of the Qur'an, Allah (SWT) enjoins spending the night in His :glorification and worship. In one instance, He (SWT) says

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا

.

And during part of the night adore Him, and give glory to Him (for a) long part of the [night. [۷۶:۲۶

This begs us to pose the following question: Why is night prayer more emphasized ?and rewarded than day prayers

If we think about it, during daytime numerous affairs occupy the time and mind of the human being. In the midst of all this preoccupation, it is difficult to have the peace of mind and heart that is necessary for good quality worship. But at night when it is dark and silent and when the mind is less occupied with the mundane matters of this world, the human being can acquire a tranquil state which allows him to be in harmony with .his Creator

Hence, the Prophet (SA) said, "Two raka'ats of prayer recited in the darkness of the night are more beloved to me than the world and all that is in it." (Salatul Layl) Furthermore, nighttime

is usually a time where a human being rest from the toil of the day and the body calls .for sleep

However, if a servant ignores his state of exhaustion and resists sleep to worship his Lord and communicate with his beloved in the darkness of night where everyone is asleep, that act of sacrifice pleases Allah (SWT). That's why He (SWT) says about :those who rise at night

كَانُوا قَلِيلاً مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ وَبِالأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ.

They used to sleep but little in the night. And in the early part of the morning they [asked forgiveness. [۵۱:۱۶-۱۷

In yet another verse Allah (SWT) describes the effect of reciting Salatul Layl for the :believer. He says

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَى أَن يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا.

And during a part of the night, pray Tahajjud beyond what is incumbent on you; [maybe your Lord will raise you to a position of great glory. [۱۷:۷۹

In this verse, Allah (SWT) describes the extraordinary spiritual effects of reciting Salat Al Layl. It raises the human being to "Maqame Mahmood", an elevated position of glory and praise which only few people can attain. Therefore, the reward for those who rise at night to glorify Allah (SWT) cannot be described. As the Holy Prophet (SA) said, "There is no good deed except that its reward has been outlined in the Qur'an, except Salatul Layl. Almighty Allah has not specified its reward due to its greatness (with Him." (Salatul Layl

During these holy days and

nights of the month of Sha'ban, the Prophet (SA) is in the state of humility and modesty before Allah (SWT) and he is occupied in glorifying and honoring Him till his last breathe. The supplication uses the word بُخُوعاً which means to be deeply engaged and diligently occupied.

In fact, Allah (SWT) uses this same word to the Prophet (SA) in a different context to alleviate his deep concern and disappointment that his people were not embracing the truth:

لَعَلَّکَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَکَ أَلَّا يَکُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ.

[Perhaps you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe. [۲۶:۳

It is not surprising that this same person who grieved himself about the disbelief of his people is deeply engaged in prayer and worship such that even before his official inauguration of prophethood, he used to go secretly every now and then to Cave Hiraa' in the mountains in the darkness and silence of night and exercise an intimate relationship with his Creator while engaged in meditation and worship.

This same esteemed Prophet (SA) is now engaging himself in glorification and veneration of Allah (SWT) during the holy month of Sha'ban after excelling in his role as the Seal of Prophets who was sent as a mercy to the world. Along the same lines, the Prophet (SA) confesses that "The coolness of my eyes lies in Salah." (Salat Al Mu'min fi Dawq Al Kitab Wal Sunnah) Hence we can better understand the meaning of the above phrase in the supplication.

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Attaining Prophetic Intercession

اَللّهُمَّ فَاَعِنّا عَلَى الْاسْتِنانِ

بِسُنَّتِهِ فيهِ وَ نَيْلِ الشَّفاعَهِ لَدَيْهِ. اَللّهُمَّ وَاجْعَلْهُ لی شَفیعاً مُشَفَّعاً

O` Allah! Help us in following his life pattern and in achieving his intercession. Oh Allah! Appoint him as an intercessor for me and his intercession is accepted by You

After beseeching Allah (SWT) by the blessings of the holy month of Sha'ban which attained its special status due to its association to the Prophet (SA), and after briefly describing his engagement in prayer and worship during the nights and days of this .month, the servant is now praying for himself for the sake of his hereafter

He asks that Allah (SWT) assist him in his journey of following the Prophet (SA) and taking him as his role model. There is no doubt that all Muslims are required to follow .(the Sunnah of the Prophet (SA

However, the question remains which Sunnah is genuine and which one was invented later and was falsely attributed to the Prophet (SA)? In a famous authenticated Hadith Ath-Thaqalayn, the Prophet (SA) announced: "I am leaving for you two precious and weighty Symbols that if you adhere to both of them, you shall not go astray after me. They are, the Book of Allah, and my progeny, that is, my Ahlul Bayt. The Merciful has informed me that these two shall not separate from each other till they come to me ".(by the Pool (of Paradise

According to this and many other countless prophetic traditions, his Ahlul Bayt (AS) are the best example after him and

they possess unparalleled knowledge of the Sunnah of the Prophet (SA). Hence, one cannot truly follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (SA) without referring to his purified household who are the Arc of Salvation and the compass which leads to the Siraat Al .(Mustaqeem (Straight Path

The next prayer which the supplicant asks for is the intercession of the Holy Prophet (SA). The idea of intercession has been strongly supported in the Holy Qur'an as well as in authentic Hadith. The famous Sunni scholars Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah relate in their Sunan collections, and likewise Nasa'i in `Amal al-Yawm w'al-Layla, Tabarani, Hakim, Bayhaqi and others on the authority of `Uthman ibn Hunayf that a blind man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and said: "Ask Allah to heal ".me

He replied: "If you wish I will pray for you and if you wish you can be patient for this is better for you." "Pray to Allah for me" he said. So the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) ordered him to make good his wudu' (ablution) and then to make the :following supplication

اللهم إنی أسألـک وأتوجه إلیک بنبیک محمـد نبی الرحمه، یا محمـد إنی أتوجه بک إلی ربی فی حاجتی هـذه لتقضـی، اللهم فشفعه فی.

O Allah, I ask You and I turn to You by Your Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of Mercy. O Muhammad! I turn by you to my Lord concerning this need of mine that it ,may be fulfilled. O Allah

.grant him intercession for me

Uthman bin Hunayf remarks: “By Allah we did not disperse nor did we converse for` long before the man entered and it was if there had never been anything wrong with him.” The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) then said to him: ”.“if there is a similar need, do the same

And the Holy Qur’an approves the idea of the Holy Prophet (SA) praying to Allah (SWT) .for forgiveness on behalf of the sinning believers

وما أرسلنا مِن رسول إلا ليُطاع بإذن الله ولو أنهم إذ ظلموا أنفسهم جاءوك فاستغفروا الله واستغفر لهُم الرسول لوجدوا الله تواباً رحيماً

.

We did not send any apostle but to be obeyed by Allah's leave. Had they, when they wronged themselves, come to you and pleaded to Allah for forgiveness, and the Apostle had pleaded for forgiveness for them, they would have surely found Allah all-clement, all-merciful. [۴:۶۴]

So the Prophet (SA) has the authority to act as intercessor on behalf of his nation, and this authority is further extended to the Infallible Imams (AS) from his progeny. Thus, the chances of a servant’s prayers being accepted by the divine abode are indeed .higher and more guaranteed than if he as a fallible servant prays directly on his own

However, there are conditions to receiving intercession and the most obvious is to sincerely believe that the Prophet (SA) and his Ahlul Bayt (AS) have the authority and power from Allah (SWT) to act as intercessors as a

virtue of their divinely appointed position of Imamate. Also, one of the conditions for attaining intercession is performing the obligatory Salah (prayers) on time as the Prophet (SA) has said, "My intercession shall not reach the person who delays prayer (even) after its time has arrived and (he delays it) till the time has expired." (Kitab Al Kaafi)

The apparent meaning here is referring to the daily Salah which were are ordered to perform; however, one can reflect upon the latent meaning that perhaps the “Salah” here refers to the benedictions (Salawat) sent on the Prophet (SA) and his holy household! If a person takes that action lightly or abandons the recitation of Salawat, they will not be worthy to attain the Shafa’at of the Infallible Imams (AS).

After all, the more care and devotion you give to a person, the more you award and reward you can expect from them. Likewise, the more neglect and disregard you have towards someone, the less likely will that person express love to you.

At this stage of the supplication, the servant once again stresses his appeal to be granted the intercession of the Holy Prophet (SA) and for it to become accepted by the divine abode. This appeal is made right after highlighting the special blessings of the month of Sha’ban which has been honored solely due to the fact that it is the Prophet’s month. By approaching the month of Sha’ban and by entering its door represented in the immaculate character of

the Seal of Messengers (SA), the servant guarantees for himself acceptance of his !(prayers and bestowal of blessings of the month of Sha’ban from Allah (SWT

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Muhammad: the Path to Salvation

وَ طَريقاً اِلَيْكَ مَهيَعاً وَاجْعَلْنى لَهُ مُتَّبِعاً

And appoint him to show us a simple path towards You and make me his follower

The supplicating believer continues to ask for guidance for “a simple path towards Allah (SWT)” via the Holy Prophet (SA) after requesting for an accepted intercession or path which he is seeking has only one destination – the Almighty طريق from him. This God. And this path is mentioned in the singular form to lift our attention that there is .only one path and one way towards His divine proximity

In fact, as Muslims we pray everyday to Allah (SWT) in our obligatory Salah at least :ten times when reciting Surah Al Fatiha to guide us to the straight path

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

[Show us the straight path. [۱:۶

A true believer, regardless of how learned and wise he may be, has to pray for this blessing from the All-Knowing and All-Wise Lord. Man needs guidance not only to possess knowledge of the theory and practice of the doctrine he believes in, but also .to perceive the extraordinary truths which open up new spiritual horizons

As Mir Pooya explains in his commentary of the Holy Qur’an, the right path mentioned here is neither any particular path nor the doctrines of the religion. There are several angles of human life in this world. The physical, mental, moral and

spiritual aspects of living, together with its many divisions, need guidance to find the right path. The guidance to the right path mentioned in the Qur'an encompasses all .aspects of the various paths open to the human soul in this life

Mir Pooya clarifies that to fulfill the purpose of his creation, which is the ultimate purpose of man's existence in this world, the servant prays to the creator for spiritual assistance to keep him on the right path. Man's effort and strive in the way to perfection, by perpetual obedience and quest for help and guidance, should be .continuous, then alone he can keep to the right path which leads to Allah

According to most exegetists of this verse of Surah Al Fatiha, the Siraat Al Mustaqeem (as we've mentioned before) refers to Imam 'Ali (AS) who represents all of the Infallible Imams from his progeny. Hence, we articulate that when the supplicant is asking for guidance to the path, he is specifically asking for guidance towards the Wilayah of Imam 'Ali (AS) and his purified descendants. And if he has already been guided to it, he is asking that Allah (SWT) make his feet stead fast on this right path so that he continues to tread this path towards human perfection via the perfect models .for mankind

Now, what are the rewards of one who is steadfast on the right path represented in :the holy household of the Prophet (SA)? Allah (SWT) says in Surah Al Jinn

وَأَنْ لَوِ اسْتَقَامُوا

عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لأَسْقَيْنَاهُمْ مَاءً غَدَقًا

[If they tread the right path, We shall give them to drink water in abundance. [۷۲:۱۶

According to Al-Kaafi, Imam Al Baqir (AS) explained that the interpretation of this verse is that if the people followed the right path of Wilayah (guardianship) of Imam 'Ali (AS) and the Imams from his descendants and obeyed them in their commands and prohibitions, their reward will be that the Infallible guides will offer them "water in abundance" which is a metaphor to embellishing their hearts with faith and certainty.

According to Imam As-Sadiq (AS) as mentioned in Tafseer Al Saafi, the water in this verse stands for the knowledge and insight into higher things which is available to those who follow the teachings of the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (AS). It is interesting to note that in the next verse:

وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا

And whoever turns aside from the reminder of his Lord, He will make him enter into an afflicting chastisement. [۷۲:۱۷]

In Tafseer Al Saafi, Al Qummi narrates that Imam As-Sadiq (AS) said that the "remembrance of his Lord" ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ refers to the Wilayah of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS). Hence, this verse confirms the interpretation of the "path" which is represented by the Ahlul Bayt (AS) who are the Siraat Al Mustaqeem!

The supplicant also requests that Allah (SWT) gives him the success to be a true follower and adherent to the Holy Prophet (SA), not only in the matters

of jurisprudence, but most importantly in the matters of faith and beliefs. Being that the believer at this stage of the supplication has already confessed Tawheed of Allah (SWT) and acknowledged the Nubuwwat (prophet hood) of Muhammad (AS), it follows that the remaining key component of faith which has yet to be fulfilled or .(acknowledged is the Imamate and guardianship after the Prophet (SA

So, the servant is praying that Allah (SWT) opens his heart and mind to see the truth and more importantly to accept it which will lead to his obedience to the Prophet (SA) regarding the command of Wilayah to Imam 'Ali (AS) and the Infallible Imams (AS) .after him

*****

Divine Pleasure Forgiveness

حَتّی اَلْقاکَ یَوْمَ الْقِیمَهِ عَنّی راضِیاً وَ عَنْ ذُنُوبی غاضِیاً

Till I meet You on the Day of Resurrection in a state that You be pleased with me ignoring my sins

The servant concludes his Salawat Sha'baniyyah with this last phrase which summarizes the main goal of his discourse to Allah (SWT) and the aim that he is pursuing. The inevitable destination that each creature will face is death and no one is :excluded from it. As Allah (SWT) says

کل نفسٍ ذائقه الموت

[Every soul shall taste death.[۳:۱۸۵

meet Allah(لقاء الله Hence, there is no escape from this reality that we will experience (SWT)(and return back to Him with the event of death. The question is not whether we will meet Allah (SWT) or not; the question is how we will meet in and in what !condition

Is He (SWT) going to be pleased to meet us or not? Does punishment await us or reward? Hence, when the servants says "Till I meet you on the day of resurrection in a state that You be pleased with me", he is praying to achieve the satisfaction and pleasure of his Lord. To attain the pleasure of Allah (SWT) simply requires for us to .follow his commands and obey him unconditionally

Furthermore, to obey Allah (SWT) is equivalent to obeying all His prophets and :messengers as well as the divinely chosen guides as indicated in this verse

أطيعوا الله ورسوله وأولى الأمر منكم .

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from [among you. [۴:۵۹

As Mir Pooya nicely puts it into perspective when explaining the obedience and those who are in authority, "The command to obey is infinite-total obedience in all material, religious and spiritual matters, therefore, as this verse clearly signifies, the Ulul Amr must also be as just, wise and merciful as Allah and the Holy Prophet are, and he who - administers the affairs of mankind should be the Khalifatullah (vicegerent of Allah) ".and the Waliallah

Hence, the ultimate aim of the servant is to meet Allah (SWT) while having obeyed Him and submitted to His divine representatives be it prophet, messenger, or successor. This state of unconditional obedience will naturally lead to attaining divine :pleasure and being included among those whom Allah (SWT) says in Surah Al Fajr

يَا أَيَّتُهَا

النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّهُ

[Oh soul that is at peace [۸۹:۲۷

ارْجِعِی إِلَیٰ رَبِّکِ رَاضِیَهً مَرْضِیَّهً

[Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing (Him). [۸۹:۲۸

And that state is the peak of bliss in which both the lover (servant) and the beloved (Creator) are in harmony with each other!

It is interesting to note that the supplicant here uses the words وَ عَنْ ذُنُوبی غاضِیاً (ignoring my sins) instead of saying وَ عَنْ ذُنُوبی غافراً (forgiving my sins).

To ignore is not the same as to forgive because if the process of ignoring is accomplished, then forgiveness is no longer needed since that which is ignored is no longer in the picture. So the servant is in fact making a smart move by asking Allah (SWT) to not only forgive, but to disregard his sins as if it doesn't exist!

After all, Allah the Merciful may forgive a person for a particular sin but the sin still remains as a pollutant to his record of deeds, and the pattern of sinning stains his book which he will be resurrected with.

However, if Allah (SWT) ignores a sin by His own will, then it is as if the servant never erred or committed injustice! This is a higher level of mercy which Allah (SWT) may offer to his devout servant who seeks His pleasure and obeys His commands.

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Eternal Mercy Bliss

قَدْ اَوْجَبْتَ لی مِنْکَ الرَّحْمَهَ وَالرِّضْوانَ وَ اَنْزَلْتَنی دارَ الْقَرارِ وَ مَحَلَّ الْاَخْیارِ .

For You have prescribed mercy and gratification from You and my entertainment a peaceful abode and

.the abode of the virtuous people

Once the servant reaches the stage of attaining reciprocal pleasure with Allah (SWT) and his sins overlooked by the All-Merciful, there is only one end result to this peaceful path. Allah (SWT) then prescribes His Mercy and Gratification to His servant which is .translated in the transfer of the soul and body to the eternal abode of bliss

in the رضوان and Ridwan رحمه There are many different colors and flavors of Rahma book of Allah (SWT) and when we speak about divine mercy and pleasure, it is certainly not anything close to what we humans fathom or imagine. In one instance, :Allah (SWT) talks about those who pursue the pleasure of Allah

أَفَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ كَمَنْ بَاءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ

Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah like him who has made himself deserving [of displeasure from Allah. [۳:۱۶۲

In this verse, the word Ridwan can be interpreted from multiple angles and Allah .(SWT) knows best

First, the "Ridwan of Allah" refers to something or someone or some path to be followed which is not to be compared with those who incur the wrath of Allah (SWT) on themselves. Based on our discussion so far regarding the high status and path to salvation which we are instructed to follow as explained in verse [۴:۵۹], we may now .correlate this verse to be referring to the Prophet (SA) and his holy household

Second, another interpretation of this verse according to Al-Kaafi and Al-'Ayaashi is that Imam

As-Sadiq (AS) has affirmed that "those who followed the pleasure of Allah refers to the Imams and by Allah they have achieved high ranks to Allah; the deeds of those believers who have recognized our rights and embraced our Wilayah will be multiplied ".and Allah (SWT) will elevate them in high ranks

On that note, Al-'Ayaashi comments that those mentioned in the above verse who deserve the displeasure of Allah are those who rejected the rights of Imam 'Ali (AS) and the Infallible Imams from the Ahlul Bayt (AS) as well as those who followed these .rejecters of truth

In the context of the above interpretation of the verse regarding "Ridwan of Allah", we may return back to our discussion of the devout servant who will receive the "Ridwan" prescribed by Allah (SWT) to him as a result of attaining His pleasure and overlooking of his sins. Since the servant has already attained the pleasure of Allah as the supplication again repeats the derivative of that "عنی راضیاً" denoted by the word .word (Ridwan) as the fruit of achieving that pleasure

Although the apparent meaning of both words are the same (which is pleasure), however upon reflection, there must exist a deeper meaning for the word Ridwan that is mentioned here. After contemplating about the interpretation of the above verse [۳:۱۶۲], we may now consider that the Ridwan which Allah (SWT) refers to as a reward to the servant is none other than close proximity with the Prophet (SA) and Ahlul

."peaceful abode" دارَ الْقَرارِ Bayt (AS) in the Hereafter where there is

This beautiful supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah ends by emphasizing that this peaceful abode cannot reach the highest stage of peace, tranquility, and serenity except if the inhabitant of heaven dwells with those who are virtuous, as indicated by the abode of the virtuous people). The question now begs itself: Since we) وَ مَحِلَّ الْأَخْيار as sinful believers cannot possibly reach the high levels and ranks of the immaculate personalities of the Prophet (SA) and Ahlul Bayt (AS), how can we then receive such great reward that we enjoy their abode in heaven while they are in exceptionally high ?(ranks to Allah (SWT

The answer here is logical and returns to the fact that it is only because of Allah's absolute Mercy which results in His overlooking of our sins due to our obedience to Him in the matter of Wilayat which will lead us to attain the intercession of the Holy Household of the Seal of Prophets (SA). With this blessed intercession, we are further indebted to Allah (SWT) and His chosen guides and we will eternally live as humble servants serving their cause and rotating around their axis of Wilayah which leads to the pleasure of the One Creator, just as a honeybee dances around a flower, their !source of nutrition and livelihood

Conclusion

After briefly scrutinizing this superb supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah, the servant now begins to recognize the significance of these profound words which has

been divinely inspired to the Prophet (SA) who passed it on to his successors till it was taught and presented to us by Imam 'Ali ibn Al Husain As-Sajjad (AS). Hence, it is also .known as Salawat Imam Zainul 'Abideen

This prayer is unique in that it repeatedly pronounces the appeal for benedictions to be sent on the Holy Prophet (SA) and his purified Household (AS) which is one of the highly recommended acts to be done in the eyes of Allah (SWT), especially in the .month of Sha'ban

Every call for benediction is followed by presentation of a fabulous virtue and exceptional merit which only these divine guides possess due to their high rank and close position to Allah (SWT). After the servant recognizes the high status and lofty position of the Ahlul Bayt (AS), he then acknowledges their right of Wilayah and obedience over all believers and presents them as intercessors between him and his .Lord

He beseeches Allah (SWT) by the blessings of the month of Sha'ban which is honored due to its association with the Holy Prophet (SA). This special month which precedes the holy month of Ramadan also contains a very fateful night, the ۱۵th night which marks the holy birth of the last Imam from the descendents of Imam 'Ali (AS) who is .the occulted Imam of our time

It is no wonder that this supplication of Salawat Sha'baniyyah is also recommended to recite on this extraordinary night as it reminds us again that

this month has received its exceptional status because of the birth of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), the ۱۲th star which rose on this day to shine till the end of time just like the sun benefits the earth while it is behind the clouds!

It is certainly not a coincidence that this same night of the ۱۵th is also the night which the Almighty (SWT) takes decisions in the matters of sustenance, life and death and welfare of the people for the next year.

Next to the Night of Qadr, the ۱۵th night of Sha'ban is the most auspicious night of the Islamic calendar (also known as Night of Bara'at). According to both Imam Al Baqir (AS) and As-Sadiq (AS), Allah (SWT) has promised to fulfill every legitimate desire put forward to Him on that night and He (SWT) bestows on His creation from His bounty and forgives them out of His grace and generosity.

With that in mind, the servant calls to Allah (SWT) by the sanctity of these divine luminary guides and prays to attain the pleasure and forgiveness of Allah (SWT) by the blessings of the Holy Prophet (SA) who is the owner of this holy month.

If a believer recites this fantastic prayer daily during the month of Sha'ban while recognizing its true essence and significance, he will be more prepared to receive this special night of the ۱۵th which highlights the climax and peak of blessings of this month! He will

also ascend himself to a spiritual level that will make him more ready to embrace the holy month of Ramadan!

The servant concludes the supplication by recognizing the fact that true happiness is to shadow the Infallible Imams (AS) and inhabit the heavens with them eternally while enjoying the proximity of the Almighty Creator.

Indeed, true bliss is to taste the pleasure of unconditional love and continuous servitude to Allah (SWT) alongside His best of creation and model for mankind represented in the Holy Prophet (SA) and his purified Ahlul Bayt (AS). Praise be to Allah (SWT) who created the holy month of Sha'ban and specialized it with its unique honor that is associated with the manifestation of divine effulgence and heavenly guidance.

Full Text of Salawat Sha'baniyyah

صلوات شعبانيه

أن يصلّی عند كلّ زوال من ايّام شعبان وفی ليله النّصف منه بهذه الصّلوات المرويّه عن السّجاد عليه السلام:

بِسْمِ اللّهِ الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"اَللّـهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّد وَآلِ مُحَمَّد، شَجَرَهِ النُّبُوَّهِ، وَمَوْضِعِ الرِّسالَهِ، وَمُخْتَلَفِ الْمَلائِكَهِ، وَمَعْدِنِ الْعِلْمِ، وَاَهْلِ بَيْتِ الْوَحْيِ، اَللّـهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّد وَآلِ مُحَمَّد الْفُلْكِ الْجارِيَهِ فِی اللُّجَجِ الْغامِرَهِ، يَأْمَنُ مَنْ رَكِبَها، وَيَغْرَقُ مَنْ تَرَكَهَا، الْمُتَقَدِّمُ لَهُمْ مارِقٌ، وَالْمُتَاَخِّرُ عَنْهُمْ زاهِقٌ، وَاللاّزِمُ لَهُمْ لاحِقٌ، اَللّـهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّد وَآلِ مُحَمَّد، الْكَهْفِ الْحَصينِ، وَغِياثِ الْمُضْطَرِّ الْمُسْتَكينِ، وَمَلْجَأِ الْهارِبينَ، وَعِصْمَهِ الْمُعْتَصِمينَ، اَللّـهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّد وَآلِ مُحَمَّد صَلاهً كَثيرَهً، تَكُونُ لَهُمْ رِضاً وَلِحَقِّ مُحَمَّد وَآلِ مُحَمَّد اَداءً وَقَضاءً، بِحَوْل مِنْكَ وَقُوَّه يا رَبَّ الْعالَمينَ، اَللّـهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّد وَآلِ مُحَمَّد، الطَّيِّبينَ الاَبْرارِ الاَخْيارِ، الَّذينَ اَوْجَبْتَ حُقُوقَهُمْ، وَفَرَضْتَ طاعَتَهُمْ وَوِلايَتَهُمْ، اَللّـهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّد وَآلِ مُحَمَّد، وَاعْمُرْ قَلْبی بِطاعَتِكَ،

وَلا تُخْزِنى بِمَعْصِيَتِكَ، وَارْزُقْنى مُواساهَ مَنْ قَتَّرْتَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رِزْقِكَ بِما وَسَّعْتَ عَلَيَّ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ، وَنَشَرْتَ عَلَيَّ مِنْ عَدْلِكَ، وَاَحْيَيْتَنى تَحْتَ ظِلِّكَ، وَهذا شَهْرُ نَبِيِّكَ سَيِّدِ رُسُلِكَ، شَعْبانُ الَّذى حَفَفْتَهُ مِنْكَ بِالرَّحْمَهِ وَالرِّضْوانِ، الَّذى كانَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِه وَسَلَّمَ يَدْاَبُ فى صِيامِه وَقِيامِه فى لَيالِيهِ وَاَيّامِه بُخُوعاً لَكَ فى اِكْرامِه وَاِعْظامِه اِلى مَحَلِّ حِمامِهِ، اَللّـهُمَّ فَاَعِنّا عَلَى الْاِسْتِنانِ بِسُنَّتِه فيهِ، وَنَيْلِ الشَّفاعَهِ لَدَيْهِ، اَللّـهُمَّ وَاجْعَلْهُ لى شَفيعاً مُشَفَّعاً وَطَريقاً اِلَيْكَ مَهيعاً، وَاجْعَلْنى لَهُ مُتَّبِعاً حَتّى اَلْقاكَ يَوْمَ الْقِيامَهِ عَنّى راضِياً، وَ عَنْ ذُنُوبى غاضِياً، قَدْ اَوْجَبْتَ لى مِنْكَ الرَّحْمَهَ وَالرِّضْوانَ، وَاَنْزَلْتَنى دارَ الْقَرارِ وَمَحَلَّ الْاَخْيارِ. "

** Please recite this short supplication and dedicate it to the Holy Prophet (SA) and his Purified Household! **

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In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

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Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

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We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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